

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT
EVENTS CONCERNING THE LAOTIAN CRISIS

FIFTH INSTALLMENT:

1 JANUARY to 30 APRIL 1962

Historical Division
Joint Secretariat
Joint Chiefs of Staff

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HISTORICAL DIVISION
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1 Jan 62 Phoumi Nosavan, Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister of the Royal Laotian Government (RLG), informed US Ambassador Winthrop Brown that he was still considering what reply, if any, to send to Prince Souvanna Phouma. Souvanna, the leader of a "neutralist" faction, had been given a mandate by King Savang to form a government of national union, and, in recent negotiations with the RLG and the pro-Communist Pathet Lao headed by Prince Souphanouvong, had proposed that, in such a government, the key Ministries of Defense and Interior be allotted to Souvanna's neutralist faction rather than to right or left wing groups of Phoumi and Souphanouvong (see item 27-30 December 1961). Souvanna had allowed Phoumi time to consider this, but the Prince had said that he and Souphanouvong would return to Vientiane for further negotiations only if Phoumi gave an affirmative reply.

On 31 December, Ambassador Brown had informed Phoumi that the US Government, in a reversal of its previous policy, now supported Souvanna's proposal with regard to the two ministries (see item). Reviewing this stand for Phoumi on 1 January, the Ambassador said that neither of the two strong opposing forces in Laos would ever agree to a government in which the other controlled the two key cabinet positions of Defense and Interior. Hence the only way to achieve a government of national union was to allot the disputed posts to the center faction.

Ambassador Brown pointed out to Phoumi that not to reply would be to break off negotiations with Souvanna. Phoumi must realize, therefore, that his decision would be "a very crucial one as regards US relations with him and Boun Oum [Premier of the RLG and titular head of the right wing faction] as well as regards Souvanna." Phoumi denied that the RLG had any desire to break off negotiations, and he refused to agree that a failure to reply to Souvanna could properly be so interpreted. Nor did he accept the reasoning behind the US conclusion that Defense and Interior must be conceded to the center faction. Phoumi said he had already made concessions in allowing Souvanna-- a weak man and clearly not a true neutral since he had Soviet support--to seek to form a government. As for the effect of his decision on relations with the United States, Phoumi said he felt the US was already beginning to withdraw its support. According to Brown, "He said that he thought the US was continuing to retreat and that our whole policy had changed a great deal since January 1961."

In reporting this meeting to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Brown said he was convinced that "Phoumi now clearly understands that if decision he makes tonight is adverse it will not only mean rupture with Souvanna but loss of US support to him and Boun Oum The strong probability is that the answer will be unfavorable." This, said Brown in a subsequent message to Secretary Rusk and Assistant Secretary Harriman, would be a "direct refusal to follow our advice on a cardinal point of policy If we are ever to convince him [Phoumi] that we will not support him whatever he does we must therefore act."

The first step, continued Brown, seemed clear. He would request an immediate audience with the King and explain to him that a government of national union could only be attained if Defense and Interior were allotted to the center, that the US believed that the refusal of Boun Oum and Phoumi to send any message to Souvanna on this point rendered further negotiation impossible, that the US could not be expected to continue support of a government whose policies it disapproved, and that the US Government hoped His Majesty would exercise his influence so that US aid to Laos could be continued, either by changing the current decision of the Laotian Government or by a change in that Government.

Subsequent steps, continued Brown, were more difficult to choose. The problem was to "take some action that will be visible, have immediate effect and convince Phoumi viscerally as well as intellectually that he really risks having US aid to Laos cut off, but at the same time to avoid unnecessary harm to Laos," such as a dangerous impairment of the capabilities of the RLG's Army (the Forces Armees du Royaume, or FAR).

A public statement by Brown or the Department of State to the effect that the RLG was unreasonable in its position on the Defense and Interior Ministries, or a visit by Brown to Souvanna and Souphanouvong at Khang Khay, would dramatize US willingness to part company with Phoumi and Boun Oum. The "real sanction," however, would be "cutting aid and military aid is . . . nearest Phoumi's heart." Any drastic step, such as letting it be known that aid would be entirely stopped, might drive Phoumi into a desperate military action in the hope that retaliation by the Pathet Lao would force the US to come to his support. Brown did not wish to call in the MAAG teams from the field because of the demoralizing effect on the troops and because it would cut the US off from knowledge of what was going on. The course Brown recommended was suspension of deliveries of military supplies into the country. In addition, he could tell certain ministers and other key personalities, without being more specific, that the US would not support the RLG position on the Defense and Interior Ministries.

Brown cautioned that these modest sanctions might be insufficient. The US should be prepared "to go all the way if necessary, realizing the cost to the FAR and ultimately to the Lao people if we drastically cut their military and economic aid." The US should not, however, expect quick results from the application of sanctions. A possible face-saving device for Boun Oum, if he wished to yield, would be a call by the Co-Chairmen of the 14-Nation Geneva Conference on Laos for another meeting of the three Princes in Geneva. Brown, however, was not optimistic.

"The hard fact is," he concluded, "that the sanctions we have available to us are somewhat like the atom bomb--too big to use without causing us almost as much harm as those to whom they are applied."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 919, 920, 1 Jan 62.

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1 Jan 62 Ambassador Brown received word through the Chairman of the International Control Commission for Laos (ICC) that Souvanna planned to depart for Paris the following day, since he was certain that no satisfactory reply was to be expected from Phoumi and Boun Oum. Souvanna said he would be gone "for a week, a month, or even a year." Brown reported that French Ambassador Falaize was sending a message to Souvanna urging him to remain in Laos until 4 January, stressing the need for time to allow Western diplomatic pressures to work on the RLG and the fact that immediate departure would "play into Phoumi's hands." The Falaize message would include a statement that the US and British Ambassadors, as well as the ICC, concurred in the suggestion.

(Souvanna, nevertheless, departed for Paris on 2 January.)

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 918, 1 Jan 62; 934, 3 Jan 62.

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The 14-Nation Conference on Laos reconvened in Geneva, having been in semi-recess during the Christmas holidays. The US delegation observed that the atmosphere of the Conference was far from favorable in view of the failure of the recent meeting of the three Princes at Vientiane. This failure was ascribed by the non-Communist Conference delegations to the obstructionism of Boun Oum and Phoumi, while the Communist representatives went beyond this by asserting that such tactics had been actively sponsored by the United States.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1007, 6 Jan 62.

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Small-scale skirmishes between FAR and anti-government forces took place in the vicinity of Muong Sai, Tha Thom, Mahaxay, and Ban Hin Lap as FAR forces moved into better positions for initiating offensive attacks, if ordered. On 3 January CINCPAC reported to the JCS that there was no indication, however, of hostilities being resumed in the immediate future.

(S) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 030210Z Jan 62, and 030422Z Jan 62; (TS-NOFORN) J-3, Southeast Asia Sitrep 1-62, 4 Jan 62, JMF 9150/9108 (62).

2 Jan 62

In a memorandum for its own use, the Far East Region, OSD (ISA), summarized [redacted] estimate of FAR capabilities and [redacted] proposals for US policy. [redacted] estimate of FAR capabilities was substantially similar to that put forward by CHMAAG Laos (see item 20 December 1961), except [redacted] gave particular attention to the area [redacted] capabilities for irregular warfare. [redacted] the numbers and locations of tribesmen in every area of Laos, men thus far unarmed but evidently willing to fight if given weapons.

[redacted] It would be "politically impossible" at present for the US to begin the large-scale and continuous arming of minority peoples in Laos. However, [redacted] an inconspicuous and gradual arming

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of tribesmen--expanding from already friendly villages to adjoining areas, making these areas "safe" and expanding again--would be feasible, difficult for friend or enemy to detect, and politically defensible inasmuch as the enemy was also arming and training villagers. In this manner, [redacted] tribesmen responsive to the US could largely take over Sam Neua province in three to six months and could begin to infiltrate the DRV. [redacted] an accelerated program to build helicopter strips and airfields capable of handling CARIBOU aircraft (an experimental two-engine STOL transport under development for the US Army) would give the Meo and other tribesmen a greater mobility and a consequent opportunity to use new and more effective tactics in their operations.

In view of the improved FAR capabilities and of the latent possibilities of increased irregular activity by friendly tribesmen, [redacted] recommended that the US:

1. Abandon its willingness to see the RLG accept a coalition government on terms which, in the "honest judgment" of both the RLG and the US, would probably mean the subsequent communization of Laos. The US should not, [redacted] contemplate any "drastic action," such as terminating aid to the RLG or announcing that Souvanna was the only possible Prime Minister for Laos. Rather, the US should support the RLG in insisting upon strong cabinet posts and strong numerical representation in the coalition government.
2. Recognize that prolonged negotiations would permit the RLG to improve its military situation; refuse, consequently, to allow a time limit to be placed upon negotiations, and insist instead upon the wisdom of allowing the opposing Lao factions to "proceed at their own pace and find their own levels."
3. Authorize the arming of Lao civilians who desired weapons for self-defense.
4. Authorize the "immediate" arming of 3000 to 4000 Meo in Xieng Khouang province, the "gradual" arming of additional Meo in Sam Neua province, and the "discreet" arming of Meo near Muong Sai and Yao tribesmen near Muong Sing.
5. Stop treating the RLG as a "caretaker government." Discussions should be inaugurated on economic aid and civil police programs; any programs agreed to should be implemented, whatever the status of negotiations at the time.
6. Be prepared to accept the continuation for one to two years of a "low-key struggle" for control of Laos, realizing that although "stalemate" would be the most favorable result to be expected from such a struggle, this stalemate would be on better geographical, military, and political terms than could presently be had.

During this period, [REDACTED] MAAG would attempt to maintain the current "favorable momentum" in Laos. They would continue training the FAR and irregulars, build and enlarge airfields and helicopter strips and provide additional helicopters and light transport aircraft, provide the FAR with more and better equipment, continue to urge Phoumi to replace incompetent leaders, and begin to "marry" the FAR with the irregular forces. They would also prepare, by planning, training, and stockpiling, to carry out military or paramilitary portions of the suggested policy.

(S) "Proposal for Support of Additional Resistance Forces in Laos," w/apps, 2 Jan 62; OSD (ISA), FER/SEA Br. Files.

2 Jan 62 CHMAAG Laos commented to CINCPAC upon Ambassador Brown's proposed sanctions against the RLG (see item 1 January 1962). The suspension of deliveries of military supplies would not have much effect for 30 days, CHMAAG reported. Only motor gasoline (MOGAS) was in shorter than 30 days' supply. Ordnance and ammunition shortages would not be felt for 45 days, and the FAR could conduct its training and air transport operations at reduced levels with existing supplies for 30 and 60 days, respectively. The suspension of deliveries itself could be accomplished without great difficulty, since the US could control the traffic from its storage areas in Thailand.

The suspension of financial support to the FAR would have little impact for the first 39 days. Phoumi could undoubtedly then obtain a loan from the National Bank in Laos and delay insolvency in military finances another month. During the time that financial support was halted, CHMAAG presumed that the US would continue supporting ECCOIL [Filipino technicians] and providing Air America support for the FAR. He also foresaw that MAAG would probably assume the financial support of Thai volunteers.

Regarding the recall of Mobile Training Teams (MTTs) from the field, CHMAAG agreed with Ambassador Brown that this sanction should be employed only in case of absolute necessity. He pointed out that the FAR would be seriously demoralized by such an unmistakable sign of the withdrawal of US support, and this sanction would damage, possibly irreparably, the present excellent relations between the MAAG field elements and FAR commanders. CHMAAG also thought that it should be recognized that the MTTs should preferably be withdrawn entirely from Laos immediately after their withdrawal from the field. In this way, possible frictions between them and the FAR would be avoided, and the MAAG would be spared the effort of supporting them.

It was CHMAAG's opinion that the suspension of military deliveries and the suspension of financial support would both exert considerable pressure upon the RLG. Both sanctions would, moreover, leave open the possibility of resuming an effective US military aid program; the sanction of withdrawing MTTs, however, would probably not leave this possibility open.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 189103,
2 Jan 62.

2 Jan 62 Premier Boun Oum informed Ambassador Brown that the RLG would make no reply to Souvanna regarding his proposal (see item 1 January 1962) that the Defense and Interior Ministries in a government of national union be allocated to Souvanna's center faction. Brown then informed the Secretary of State that he had asked for an immediate audience with the King. He urgently requested instructions on whether or not to begin withholding military deliveries to the RLG, as he had recommended the previous day (see item 1 January 1962). The Department of State replied immediately that the sanctions should not be initiated, noting that Souvanna's departure for Paris earlier that day provided "a few days to take stock."

In his message Ambassador Brown had said that he did not think a resumption of hostilities was likely in the immediate future, but to be prepared he asked for confirmation of his understanding of the US policy for various contingencies (see item 14 December 1961). The State Department reply of 4 January authorized the Ambassador, at his discretion, to inform Phoumi that if he attacked or unilaterally withdrew to the South the US would withdraw its MAAG advisers, air support, and supplies. Brown was authorized to implement these measures to the extent considered necessary in the light of the "tactical political and military situation" at the time. If the enemy clearly initiated the hostilities, however, the US would continue its support of the FAR. The Department assumed that MAAG was currently taking precautions to prevent any FAR operations that could be provocative to the other side.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 924, 2 Jan 62;
SecState to Vientiane, 583, 2 Jan 62; 589, 4 Jan 62.

2 Jan 62 A Radio Thailand broadcast rebuked the "many Western countries" that were advocating the speedy formation of a Lao coalition government--a government that, far from bringing strength to the fight against the Communists, would prepare the way for the Communist subjugation of Laos. The broadcast also cited unfavorably a "certain Western statesman" (probably Harriman, Ambassador Young reported), who had said that SEATO was willing to release a neutral Laos from its protection, and then scoffed that so far there had been no evidence of any SEATO protection. If SEATO had acted in Laos, it was charged, the Communists would not now be in control of half the country, with a military base in the Plaine des Jarres.

Ambassador Young commented that this broadcast was open evidence of the frustration felt in Thailand regarding Western efforts to establish a coalition government under Souvanna. He described the Thai as caught between the desire to maintain close alignment with the US and the firm belief that US policy in Laos was naive, dangerous, and bound to end in facilitating a Communist take-over "right up to the Thai border."

Young said that until recently the Embassy had been "fairly certain" that Thai officials were not trying to influence Phoumi to ignore US advice. "Now we [are] not so sure although we have no new evidence one way or the other." To Young the radio commentary indicated a Thai disposition toward closer identification with Phoumi's cause regardless of Western policy. If the US decided to apply the sanctions against Phoumi recently recommended by Ambassador Brown (see item 1 January 1962), Young anticipated great difficulty in convincing Thai officials that such action was in their best interests.

Replying on 4 January, the Secretary of State told Ambassador Young that the Thai broadcast had engendered serious concern in Washington. Although the US did not expect active Thai support on all issues, "we cannot countenance overt or covert steps by the RTG deliberately to sabotage our efforts at peaceful and acceptable settlement." Such actions could complicate the negotiations in Geneva, the Secretary continued, making it difficult if not impossible to place the blame on the Communists and/or Souvanna if negotiations should fail. He urged the Ambassador to make these views known to the Thai Government (see item 6 January 1962).

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 4 Jan 62; SecState to Bangkok, 941, 4 Jan 62.

3 Jan 62 In a message to the JCS, CINCPAC endorsed Ambassador Brown's observation (see item 1 January 1962) that sanctions against the RLG would harm the US almost as much as the RLG. According to CINCPAC, the "drastic step" of suspending military aid to the RLG would amount to a reversal of the US policy of strengthening the FAR in order to bolster the RLG's negotiating position. Such a sanction could dim further the US hopes for a neutralist government; it could even encourage the Kong Le/Pathet Lao faction, which was still receiving supplies from the Communist Bloc and improving its military position, to launch a military offensive.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 030422Z Jan 62.

3 Jan 62 Ambassador Brown, in an audience with King Savang, explained the US policy of supporting Souvanna's proposal for a government of national union with the Defense and Interior Ministries controlled by Souvanna's neutralist faction. Brown had informed Phoumi of this US position, making clear that the US could not support him in his opposition to the Souvanna proposal. Phoumi, however, evidently did not believe it.

The King replied that Phoumi did believe it and considered that US aid, by a decision of the whole US Government, had been terminated as of the previous day.

When Brown asked what should be the next step, the King replied he had nothing to say, that the RLG did not amount to anything without US support and in effect was committing suicide not only for itself but for Laos.

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The Lao, however, could not give up their principles or betray their souls. They must therefore resign themselves.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 931, 3 Jan 62.

- 3 Jan 62 Upon returning to Geneva, Soviet Ambassador Pushkin proposed to the other Co-Chairman, MacDonald, that they invite the three Princes to come to Geneva. Sullivan, Deputy Head of the US Mission, urged MacDonald to delay in the matter, but at the same time he pointed out to the State Department that the US use of delaying tactics should not go so far as to appear to "shelter Boun Oum in his obstinacy." He therefore stated that, unless otherwise instructed, he would support issuance of the invitations, which MacDonald had succeeded in having postponed until 5 January. Sullivan considered the Soviet draft invitation to be quite moderate and therefore acceptable with certain minor changes.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 994, 3 Jan 62.

- 3 Jan 62 Secretary of State Rusk informed Ambassador Brown that, according to the US delegation at the Geneva Conference, an invitation from the Conference Co-Chairmen would soon be issued to the three Princes to meet in Geneva. Rusk requested Brown to use all possible pressures on Boun Oum and Phoumi to get them to accept.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 585, 3 Jan 62.

- 3 Jan 62 It was agreed by Co-Chairman MacDonald and by the US delegation that the stalemate at the Vientiane talks and the suspicions felt among the Communist delegations regarding alleged US and Thai support for the negative attitude of the RLG made it inadvisable to negotiate at Geneva on the delicate questions of Lao relations with SEATO and the disposition of the private armies. The US delegation therefore reported that "no attempts will be initiated [at] Geneva" toward an agreement on these issues.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 993, 3 Jan 62.

- 4 Jan 62 Upon arriving at Paris, Souvanna answered questions from reporters. His replies indicated that, though he had come to Paris ostensibly for a rest, he would not discount the possibility of going to Geneva if such a journey would help resolve the Lao crisis. When asked about the "duality of US policy," he expressed confidence that the US, in spite of charges to the contrary by elements of the French press, did desire a neutral Laos. Souvanna added, however, that continued US pressure on the RLG would be necessary.

Souvanna also denied that his followers and those of Souphanouvong were united. In response to a question about Russian arms, he admitted that he received such weapons and said he distributed them as he saw fit. This last answer distressed the French Foreign Office, which feared that the statement might be quoted out of context and therefore was considering the issuance of a clarification of Souvanna's remark.

A UK Embassy officer speaking on behalf of France as well as Britain, in a brief private conversation with Souvanna, sounded him out on the possibility of a meeting of the three Princes at Geneva. Souvanna seemed receptive

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but indicated that the Conference should, for the present, only agree in principle to invite the Princes, withholding the actual invitation for several days to see if there was some favorable development. He undertook to instruct his representative, Quinim, to urge acceptance of this plan by the Conference (see item 6 January 1962). US Ambassador Gavin believed that the Anglo-French approach had been designed to anticipate Pushkin's "making a grandstand play" by calling for a meeting of the Princes at Geneva.

While waiting for the plane carrying the Prince, Quinim had "wondered aloud" to an officer of the British Embassy whether Souvanna entertained hopes of getting the Conference Co-Chairmen to visit Laos and add to the existing pressure for negotiations.

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3315, 4 Jan 62.

4 Jan 62 Ambassador Brown replied to Secretary Rusk (see item 3 January 1962) that he had "no pressures left to use on Phoumi and Boun Oum." He had made "all the threats that words alone can convey. Though my words have been general, they have been interpreted as saying aid would be cut off." These threats had been "categorically defied." What was needed now, continued Brown, was "action repeat action." He therefore renewed his recommendation (see item 1 January 1962) that military shipments be stopped. If this step was not taken, pressures on Phoumi and Boun Oum to go to Geneva should be left to representatives of the Co-Chairmen.

Later in the day, the Secretary of State replied to Ambassador Brown that the expected invitation from the Co-Chairmen created a new situation that made it desirable to hold back on further sanctions for the present. A break with Phoumi and Boun Oum, if it became necessary, should be on the issue of their willingness to go to Geneva and carry on negotiations rather than solely on the question of two specific cabinet posts.

High level discussions in Washington were planned, continued the Secretary, and specific instructions would then be issued to Brown. For use in these discussions, the Secretary requested Brown's opinion on the following:

1. Could sanctions be made so painful to other Lao that they would either force Phoumi to resign or appeal to the King to remove him?
2. Could these objectives be achieved merely by suspension of military deliveries and financial support?
3. If Phoumi were forced out, would other Lao, willing to negotiate realistically for a coalition government, be available to take over?
4. How would the Army react if it became apparent the US would no longer support it with Phoumi in charge?
5. How many forces would follow Phoumi if he went South?

6. Would the FAR command structure become totally disrupted by Phoumi's departure?

7. What commitments should the US try to get from Souvanna, with whom it would be necessary to come to some understanding in advance in the event it became necessary to break with Phoumi? (See item 6 January 1962 for Brown's reply.)

The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that consideration was being given to the possibility of obtaining Soviet agreement to restrain the Pathet Lao if, in the interest of producing a negotiated settlement, the US was forced to apply strong military sanctions against the RLG.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 937, 4 Jan 62;
SecState to Vientiane, 588, 4 Jan 62.

4 Jan 62

French Ambassador to the US Herve Alphand was, at his own request, briefed by Harriman on various aspects of the situation in Southeast Asia. Concerning Laos, Harriman reviewed the status of negotiations and said that the US was trying to persuade Boun Oum to go to Geneva for a meeting of the Princes. Alphand agreed to Harriman's proposal that the Ambassador suggest that the Government of France contact Souvanna and encourage the Prince to pursue his efforts to form a coalition. When the French Ambassador expressed satisfaction with tripartite cooperation at the Geneva Conference, Harriman indicated that "quiet" cooperation between France and the US would also be desirable in the event Souvanna succeeded in forming a government.

(C) Msg, SecState to Paris, 3729, 5 Jan 62.

4 Jan 62

The ICC report for the period 15-31 December 1961 became available to the US delegation at Geneva. The report largely consisted of a chronological record of events in Laos, including descriptions of the meetings and conflicting demands advanced by the three Princes, the various violations of the cease-fire alleged by the three sides, and the actual fighting of which the ICC had knowledge. The ICC expressed concern that a more serious breakdown of the cease-fire might occur if a coalition government were not soon formed, and it therefore urged that the three Princes be invited to meet in Geneva should all else fail.

(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 996, 4 Jan 62;
CONFE 1007, 6 Jan 62.

5 Jan 62

The Joint Chiefs of Staff presented their views on "Reassessment of US Policy in Laos" in a memorandum for the Secretary of Defense.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff described the US material and technical assistance being given Laos as "designed to maintain or strengthen the military and bargaining position of the Royal Lao Government, until such time as an acceptable agreement on a neutral Laos is achieved." Meanwhile, in the realm of political-diplomatic action the United States was restraining the RLG from military counteractions and applying pressure to its leaders to make concessions to Souvanna. The JCS thought these

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restraints and pressures, though well-intended, were having the effect of undermining the prestige, determination, and effectiveness of the RLG and its armed forces, to a point where "the legal government may soon have no tenable position from which to negotiate." In short, the US political-diplomatic efforts and military assistance efforts in Laos were at cross-purposes in some respects.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were concerned over the appearance that, in pursuing the objective of establishing a coalition government under Souvanna, US policy would make whatever concessions were necessary to obtain the "best possible" negotiated settlement. Meanwhile, they pointed out, there was no evidence that the Communists had abandoned their goal of dominating Laos. Indeed, there was considerable evidence that they had taken deliberate advantage of the cease-fire and the Geneva negotiations to intensify military operations against South Viet Nam and infiltration of Thailand and Cambodia. To the JCS the Communist tactic appeared to be to continue to negotiate over Laos until South Viet Nam had fallen and until the pro-Western elements in Laos had become so demoralized and ineffective as to pose no significant obstacle to a Communist take-over in Laos after a coalition government was formed.

The JCS believed that the military position of the RLG was not such as to make it necessary to seek a peaceful settlement at all costs. The RLG was now stronger vis-a-vis the Kong Le-Pathet Lao forces than at the beginning of the cease-fire. It could and should negotiate from a position of strength. The FAR was increasingly competent; the peoples, both Lao and minority tribesmen, were evidently willing, if armed, to organize local defense forces against the Communists; and because of superior air and rail equipment and facilities, the RLG could take better advantage of the coming rainy season than the enemy.

In these circumstances there was an opportunity for the United States to "exploit the shifting power balance in a manner to strengthen the negotiating position of the RLG while simultaneously weakening that of the Souvanna Phouma-Souphanouvong group." Not to take up this opportunity would be to neglect "an effective alternative means of executing the existing policy of achieving a neutral and independent Laos." The JCS believed that "the interests and prestige of the United States require that the Departments of State, Defense, and other agencies involved, combine their resources in a common effort to utilize those assets available to the United States and to maintain the prestige, popular support, determination, and military effectiveness of the Royal Lao Government."

"Specifically, the United States should not attempt to persuade the representatives of the Royal Lao Government at current or future negotiations to make concessions merely for the sake of agreement." To cut off US aid to the RLG as a means of pressure would be self-defeating, particularly since there was no evidence that comparable pressure was being applied from any source to Souvanna

and Souphanouvong. "To remove MAAG groups from Laos would set up an irreversible chain of events which would be disastrous to US interests and prestige."

The prime example of the type of concession the JCS believed the United States should not pressure the RLG leaders to make "merely for the sake of agreement" was the yielding of the Defense and Interior Ministries to the neutralist faction. "The retention of these two key ministries by the present RLG in any Government headed by Souvanna Phouma has great importance for the preservation of the hard-won and very considerable American military assets in Laos. A so-called neutral Defense Minister would almost certainly bar Western-oriented Laotian officers from positions of high command." Further, a diversion of US-supplied equipment from the FAR to the Kong Le and Pathet Lao forces would be likely. Fully aware of these dangers, the RLG leaders were determined to stand fast in claiming Defense and Interior, but, "notwithstanding the apparent community of interest of the two nations, the United States is exerting strong pressure on the RLG to yield on this point." The JCS observed that occasional restraint of the RLG was undoubtedly required, "but encouragement and full assurance of continued US support are equally necessary to the attainment of US objectives in Laos."

[On 12 January the Deputy Secretary of Defense forwarded this JCS memorandum to the President and to the Secretary of State. In his covering memorandum to the President, the Deputy Secretary withheld endorsement of the portions dealing primarily with political matters, but he directed attention to the fact that the JCS assessment of the military situation--that RLG capabilities were better relatively than at the time of the cease-fire--had just been confirmed by SNIE 58-62 (see item 11 January 1962). His own conclusion from the SNIE was the "we can take advantage of time effectively to further improve the situation of the RLG forces" and that there was reasonable certainty that the RLG forces could retain control of the major areas they currently held, so long as the enemy received no additional reinforcements from North Viet Nam.]

(TS) JCSM-12-62 to SecDef, "Reassessment of US Policy in Laos (C)," 5 Jan 62; derived from (TS) JCS 2344/28, 29 Dec 61; (TS) 1st N/H of JCS 2344/28, 16 Jan 62. All in JMF 9155.2/3100 (29 Dec 61).

5 Jan 62

Ambassador Brown, with the authorization of the Secretary of State, informed the Laotian Finance Minister that the US was withholding the \$3,000,000 January cash grant payment for all forms of aid. The US, said Brown, was "very disappointed at events of the last few days, at some positions taken by Phoumi and Boun Oum and at the fact that no message had been sent to Souvanna on January 1." As a consequence, the US was re-examining its entire economic, financial, and military aid program for Laos. Events of the next few days would influence the final decisions of the US. An invitation was coming from the Co-Chairmen to the three Princes to resume their discussions in Geneva. The reaction of the RLG to this invitation would be an important factor in the final decisions of the US.

The RLG reacted to the withholding of the January payment with a suspension by the National Bank of dollar and franc sales. Commercial banks quickly followed suit. The immediate effect was a rise in private kip-dollar exchange rates from the official 80 to 1 to anywhere from 85 to 150 to 1. Gold prices rose 25 per cent; food prices rose 10 to 25 per cent.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 943, 5 Jan 62;
SecState to Vientiane, 590, 4 Jan 62.

5 Jan 62

In Paris, Ambassador Gavin called upon Souvanna to convey his respects and to wish the Prince well in the endeavor to establish a free, neutral, and stable Laos. Souvanna responded to these sentiments with a recital of complaints about the "negative behavior" of Boun Oum and Phoumi during his recent stay in Laos. Since he had received no satisfactory reply from Boun Oum to his suggestions for negotiations, Souvanna had decided to journey to Paris to await developments.

In reply to Gavin's comment that the Co-Chairmen appeared to be planning to invite the Princes to Geneva, Souvanna said that, although the idea was good, the invitations should not be issued for several days. By intervening too bluntly in the kingdom's internal affairs, the Co-Chairmen might "wound Lao sensibilities." Instead, the Conference should allow a short time for "diplomatic activity" and for exchanges among the factions before calling a meeting of the Princes.

Souvanna then informed the Ambassador that he had told Consul General Holt at Zurich that the US should stop its aid to the RLG and, most important, should continue to pay the soldiers. To halt the pay of these men would, Souvanna believed, raise the possibility of a mutiny at this most critical moment. The US, however, should exert pressure by withdrawing all logistical support, transportation, and military advisory teams. In addition, pressure would have to be applied against South Viet Nam and Thailand to prevent them from aiding the Boun Oum regime. Souvanna believed that the RLG's decision to suspend the sale of both dollars and francs (see earlier item, 5 January 1962) indicated that Phoumi had taken seriously the American threats of sanctions.

Souvanna next turned to the question of Communist aid to his own faction. He declared that, although he had accepted help offered by Communist China, North Viet Nam, and the USSR, he did not intend that Laos become a Communist state. He believed that the Communist Bloc was sincere in its statements that a neutral government be established in Laos.

Although admittedly aware that Viet Minh forces were crossing southern Laos to enter South Viet Nam, Souvanna observed that he did not control the area in question. If, however, his government were established over the entire kingdom, he could, as he had intimated to Harriman, seal this invasion corridor (see item 15-17 September 1961). For the present, the problem was not

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southern Laos but the establishment, by means of the Geneva Agreements and with the consent of the Lao people, of a government headed by Souvanna.

Ambassador Gavin commented that the conversation had been amicable throughout. The Prince expressed his appreciation for Gavin's visit but did not mention the oft-repeated invitation that he visit Washington. Souvanna also remained silent about Prince Souphanouvong and did not inquire in detail about any US plans or decisions to withdraw aid from Phoumi.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3333, 5 Jan 62.

5 Jan 62 The JCS, adopting a CINCPAC recommendation of 15 December 1961, augmented the Joint Table of Distribution of MAAG Laos by 73 Army spaces, to a total authorization of 349 (317 Army; 4 Navy; 28 Air Force). The additional personnel were intended to carry out increased MAAG responsibilities for communications, within Laos and between Laos and Thailand.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 152046Z Dec 61; (C) Msg, JCS to CSA and CINCPAC, JCS 2806, 5 Jan 62; both in JMF 1040.1 (14 Apr 61).

5 Jan 62 The 38th plenary session of the Geneva Conference (first session of the reconvened Conference) met with Pushkin as Acting Chairman. He began by stating that continued disagreement among the Princes seriously endangered the cease-fire agreement, and then indicated anew where Soviet sympathies lay by reading the 1 January letter to the Co-Chairmen from Souvanna and Souphanouvong attacking Boun Oum for allegedly having refused to negotiate at Vientiane. Pushkin then presented the message drafted by the Co-Chairmen, inviting the three Princes to come to Geneva at once, mildly rebuking them for the obstructions that a Laotian settlement had continually faced, and stating that the new meeting could provide an opportunity for negotiations toward the formation of a government of national union. The invitation was approved by the Conference without comment.

Speeches from the heads of the Indian and the UK delegations followed, appealing for moderation and restraint by all, in the hope that a settlement could be reached, but delegates from North Viet Nam, the Pathet Lao, and the Chinese Communists all replied with vigorous attacks against the RLG and, above all, the US, which was castigated for purported "double-dealing," "insincerity," and "obstruction" of attempts to reach Laotian settlement.

Pushkin and the Polish delegate, Balicki, also spoke. They focused their accusations almost entirely on the RLG, limiting their remarks about the US to a few allusions to the secret support that "certain circles" were purportedly giving to Phoumi and Boun Oum.

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1001, 5 Jan 62; (OUO) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1009, 7 Jan 62; (U) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE A-21, 11 Jan 62.

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5 Jan 62 Referring to reports from CHMAAG Laos at the end of December 1961 (see items 20 and 22 December 1961) and to the recent situation as reported in his own messages to JCS of 3 January (see item 1-4 January 1962), CINCPAC urged that the US take advantage of the shift in the balance of power in favor of the RLG. This shift, according to CINCPAC, could be exploited to a considerable degree so as to improve the RLG negotiating position.

The favorable factors included: 1) Improved FAR combat capability indicated by increased competence in weapons, tactics and leadership. The antigovernment forces, CINCPAC reported, could not now capture any major city on the Mekong River from Paksane northward without overt and considerably reinforced North Viet Nam participation. 2) Evident willingness of tribal minorities to organize local defense, and the demonstrated capability of larger tribes, particularly the Meo, to maintain damaging guerrilla warfare operations against the enemy. 3) Meo capability to expand their resistance into northern and western Laos. 4) New tactics, which required only the enlargement of airfields in Meo country and the availability of suitable aircraft, of rapid deployment of FAR regulars to reinforce Meo harassment capability. In addition, CINCPAC believed that the RLG could exploit the rainy season beginning in mid-April better than the enemy could, because of a larger and more flexible airlift and generally better transport facilities.

CINCPAC suggested that by failing to exploit the shifting balance of power the United States would be neglecting an effective alternative means of executing the existing policy of achieving a neutral and independent Laos.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 050218Z Jan 62.

5 Jan 62 In a memorandum to the "Special Group," the Southeast Asia Branch, Far East Region, OSD (ISA), suggested a new course of action in US attempts to persuade Phoumi to accept allocation of the portfolios of Defense and Interior to the Souvanna neutrals. The Southeast Asia Branch recounted that the Department of State had already requested [redacted] attempt to persuade Phoumi either to 1) go to Geneva and accept the Souvanna plan for a 19-member cabinet with Phoumi as Minister of Public Works, or 2) withdraw from the RLG in favor of someone who would accept Souvanna's offer; [redacted]

To the Southeast Asia Branch, there appeared to be two possible ways to achieve one of these three results: bribe or coup d'etat. Phoumi might be bribed into resigning or acquiescing in the Western position; but a "simple bribe" would probably not be effective since Phoumi appeared more interested in power than in money. The Southeast Asia Branch therefore suggested an offer of funds that would be related to the acquisition and maintenance of power. The ISA office recommended that Phoumi be approached [redacted] and told once again the firm intention of the US to go forward with sanctions

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if the RLG did not cooperate in Western policies.

With this money Phoumi could "take care of" his loyal supporters in the FAR, fight Communism through community development schemes, and maintain his own political position. If Phoumi did not accept this offer, the Southeast Asia Branch then postulated, he might be so disturbed by it and other pressures upon him that he would consider resigning his office. The US should be quick to perceive such a trend in Phoumi's thought and be ready at the opportune moment to offer him funds again--"substantial funds" in retirement to "take care of" his loyal followers. (See items 6 and 7 March 1962.)

The Southeast Asia Branch acknowledged that staging a coup d'etat would not be impossible, but recommended that such a course of action not be considered at the present time. According to the Branch, a successful coup would take too long in preparation to achieve the State Department objective of early negotiations. Moreover, even a successful coup would risk the fragmentation of FAR loyalties and a consequent serious weakening of the military position of the RLG. As a result, the West's bargaining position might be weakened to a point where "the present reasonably favorable situation would no longer obtain."

(S) (Eyes Only) Memo for the Special Group [from FER/SEA Br., OSD (ISA)], 5 Jan 62; OSD (ISA), FER/SEA Br. Files.

5 Jan 62 Reviewing the deadlock in Laotian negotiations and examining all possible courses for a way out, Ambassador Brown recommended that "at least some consideration should be given" to an arrangement with Phoumi as Minister of Defense, assigning Interior to the Pathet Lao. Brown recognized the dangers and disadvantages of this but wondered if the result might not be more favorable than what might be expected from the current US policy. If the United States continued its attempt to induce Phoumi to concede Defense and Interior to the center faction to the point of applying military sanctions against him, the result might be to leave the right wing in Laos leaderless and ineffective and the Army crippled.

Assistant Secretary Harriman replied two days later, saying he felt that measures might still be found to make Phoumi more amenable to the Souvanna solution without bringing on the collapse of the right wing that concerned the Ambassador. At the moment a way was being sought to let Phoumi know the United States still considered him a friend, with an important role to play in an independent Laos, and that unwillingness to support him claim to Defense and Interior did not mean that the United States was abandoning him entirely. After considering Brown's suggestion, Harriman continued to believe the effect of allotting Defense to Phoumi and Interior to the Pathet Lao "would ultimately be disastrous." In any event, he

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was certain that Souvanna would not accept the Pathet Lao in so sensitive a post as Interior. "If he did, it would be clear tip-off that he is prepared to lose [the] country to communists so that whole Souvanna solution would become unacceptable to us."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 942, 5 Jan 62;
SecState to Vientiane, 600, 7 Jan 62.

6 Jan 62 Ambassador Brown, with the aid of the Country Team, replied to Secretary Rusk's questions of 4 January (see item) as follows:

1. It was highly doubtful that making sanctions painful to other Lao would result in their forcing Phoumi out of office. The original revolutionary committee (see item 18 August 1960) would probably remain loyal to Phoumi at least to the extent that they would not go over to Souvanna or join a group prepared to negotiate with him. Other Lao were discouraged from differing with Phoumi because he controlled the instruments of power, such as the Army, the police, and the security services of Colonel Siho. The so-called "Vientiane neutrals" had no clear rallying point.

2. Suspension of deliveries of military supplies and financial assistance over a long period would eventually bring Phoumi down; the time required would depend upon Phoumi's determination and the amount of support he received from Sarit. More severe measures such as withdrawing MAAG advisors would accelerate the process but at a cost that was "obvious." Either to apply these measures for a long period or to go beyond them would seriously damage the FAR and the Lao economy.

3. The King could not be counted on as a replacement for Phoumi; the Ambassador could think of no other likely volunteer. The burden of further negotiation for the right wing would probably fall on the US.

4. Most of the Army would remain loyal to Phoumi because most southern Lao would stick with him, and the Army had been recruited mostly in the South. Continued direct US support of Vang Pao would provide a measure of influence on Meo operations.

5. Many Southerners in the Army would follow Phoumi South; it was impossible to predict what others would do. "The reaction of the other side would also have a bearing on the attitude of the FAR."

6. In the opinion of Chief MAAG, the departure of Phoumi would have a disastrous effect on the FAR command structure.

7. With regard to what commitments the United States should seek in advance from Souvanna, Ambassador Brown thought Souvanna should pledge to include in his government the most capable rightists available and that he should be required to give "satisfactory undertakings" on reprisals, elections, private armies, the corridor to South Viet Nam, the ICC, the release of US prisoners

held by the Pathet Lao, and so forth. The Ambassador observed, however, that the drastic actions necessary to topple Phoumi would frustrate one standing US objective, namely, the inclusion in the coalition government of an effective rightist group with a strong leader. Implying that Souvanna might be unable to maintain an independent course as head of an unbalanced coalition, Brown suggested that any commitments made by Souvanna in advance might be of doubtful dependability.

Ambassador Brown raised a question regarding the Secretary of State's proposal to attempt to obtain Soviet agreement to "hold back PL" in the event the United States was forced to apply strong military sanctions against the RLG. Was this sufficient? "If we are to suspend military supplies should we not ask Russians to stop their airlift for instance? We ought to exact a high price from them for our abandonment [of] Phoumi."

On the same day, CINCPAC supplied comments to the JCS on the State Department questions. CINCPAC, too, felt that Phoumi probably could not be forced from office by "sanctions painful to other Lao," that even in the face of these sanctions the original revolutionary committee would probably remain loyal to Phoumi, and that a substantial portion of the Army would follow Phoumi South. CINCPAC noted that Phoumi had established a complex of military installations around Savannakhet and had deployed six of his nine GM in this southern region. If Phoumi went South, CINCPAC concluded, he probably "would not leave much command structure behind him."

Like Brown, CINCPAC saw reason to doubt that Souvanna could fully live up to any commitments he made in advance. To CINCPAC the minimum acceptable commitments appeared to be pledges by Souvanna 1) to exclude the Pathet Lao from cabinet and sub-cabinet positions in the Defense and Interior Ministries, and 2) to keep a police or other paramilitary security force separate from the Defense Ministry, so that it would be "unaffected by Geneva requirements and in a position to receive United States advice and materiel assistance." Calling attention to the views he had submitted on 5 January 1962 (see item), CINCPAC said, "I still think we do not have to take the irrevocable step of publicly disowning the anti-Communist elements in Laos and cutting off our aid to them."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 949, 6 Jan 62; CINCPAC to JCS, 060154Z Jan 62.

6 Jan 62

The Secretary of State provided Ambassador Brown the instructions promised him on 4 January (see item). These instructions, based on the assumption that Boun Oum would probably accept the Co-Chairmen's invitation (see item 3 January 1962), were as follows:

1. Follow up the Co-Chairmen's invitation directly with Boun Oum and Phoumi.
2. Make every effort to persuade Phoumi to accompany Boun Oum, since decisions taken in Phoumi's absence were

not likely to be binding. Phoumi's nonattendance at Geneva would not, however, be the cause for further withholding of the January payment.

3. If Boun Oum went to Geneva, Brown should release the January payment at an "appropriate moment." Brown was authorized to indicate in advance that resumption of payments was contingent upon Boun Oum's accepting the Co-Chairmen's invitation.

4. If Boun Oum refused the invitation, payments would continue to be withheld; subsequent steps would be considered in Washington in the light of Brown's recommendation at that time.

5. Seek to prevent Phoumi and Boun Oum from repeating publicly their adamant stand on the allocation of the Defense and Interior Ministries prior to the Geneva meeting.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 596, 6 Jan 62.

6 Jan 62

Ambassador Gavin forwarded to the Secretary of State reports from French and British diplomats concerning happenings at Geneva and comments made by Souvanna in Paris.

M. Manac'h, Director, Asian Affairs, French Foreign Office, in reviewing events in Geneva, declared that Soviet pressure had forced Quinim to agree, contrary to Souvanna's stated wishes (see items 4 and 5 January 1962), to the immediate issuance of invitations to the Princes for a meeting in Geneva. Manac'h, however, believed that a few days of waiting would be useful, since reports from the French Ambassador at Vientiane indicated that Phoumi and Boun Oum were growing more reasonable.

An officer of the British Embassy reported that Quinim had told Co-Chairman MacDonald that Souvanna had agreed to the immediate dispatch of invitations to the other Princes. British sources further declared that Souvanna had been annoyed with Quinim for accepting in the Prince's name this change of plans. Souvanna, however, had later said that he would go to Geneva whenever the other Princes did. Souphanouvong, he added, had expressed willingness to accept an invitation to Geneva. Souvanna hoped, moreover, that the US would persuade Phoumi to accept, for without Phoumi, Boun Oum's presence was useless.

Souvanna, during a conversation with an officer of the British Embassy, had again urged that the US, while withdrawing its logistic, transportation, and MAAG support from the FAR, should continue to pay Phoumi's soldiers.

Finally, Souvanna suggested to the Embassy officer that Phoumi, rather than accept Souvanna's leadership, might simply disappear from the political scene. In that case, the Prince still would be willing to organize a government according to the 19-man formula already proposed.

(C) Msgs, Paris to SecState, 3342, 3343, 6 Jan 62.

6 Jan 62 As instructed by the Secretary of State (see item 2 January 1962), Ambassador Young met with Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman to explain US policy for a peaceful settlement in Laos. Thanat, while minimizing the Thai radio broadcast of 2 January (see item 2 January 1962) as an unofficial press item of little consequence, set forth Thai views: Thailand would continue to accept the concept of a neutral Laos and, with "deep misgivings," a coalition under Souvanna. Thailand did not advocate a military solution to the Lao crisis, but it did believe that there was more than one political option open to the West. Balanced representation in the Lao cabinet was the key to an acceptable neutral coalition since it could prevent the Souvanna-Pathet Lao combination, which the Thai government considered now as firmly fixed, from dominating the country. Conceding the Defense and Interior posts to this combination, or even to Souvanna alone, would mean the end of neutral Laos. Thailand, therefore, felt a deepened apprehension over the "inevitable Communist seizure" of Laos and the probable consequent subversion of its own northeast border area. The Thai must concentrate on saving "their own necks next."

Despite this growing concern for its own security, Thailand had acted with restraint and caution in the Lao situation and had assisted the US in carrying out its policy in Laos. Now that the US supported the idea of a Souvanna-led coalition, however, Thailand must consider all hope of a negotiated settlement in Laos with adequate safeguards for Thai security impossible since the Communists would in "no time" be in full control of Laos. As a result of the recent developments in the Lao situation and the "scant" attention given Thailand by her allies, particularly in SEATO and the UN, a growing sentiment for neutralization or independent action was developing in Thailand. Thai apprehensions would be substantially relieved, however, if the US would: take a stand on SEATO reform and revitalization; set forth the priority and scope of its future support and assistance for Thailand (see item 16 January 1962); and divulge its specific plans regarding the Souvanna coalition.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 957, 7 Jan 62.

7 Jan 62 The Secretary of State, "gratified by the Ambassador's excellent approach to Souvanna" (see item 5 January 1962), instructed Ambassador Gavin concerning the manner of following up this interview. Gavin's objective, the Secretary continued, was to take advantage of Souvanna's presence in Europe, where the "Communist pressures of Xieng Khouang" were lacking, to establish a closer understanding with the Prince.

In future talks, Gavin was to emphasize the strong pressures that the US was exerting on the RLG. These, the Secretary of State pointed out, should give evidence of the US desire to aid Souvanna in forming a truly neutral government. Furthermore, the Ambassador should tell Souvanna that the US realized the necessity of paying the men of the FAR and appreciated the Prince's stated desire to prevent the Viet Minh from using Lao territory as a corridor into South Viet Nam.

Secretary Rusk expressed the hope that, when contacts among the Lao factions were renewed at Geneva, Souvanna would display reasonableness and understanding "in order to help Boun Oum and Phoumi get past this very difficult phase of the negotiations." The Secretary believed, however, that it was preferable for Souvanna to remain in Paris until Boun Oum had journeyed to Geneva.

(C) Msg, SecState to Paris, 3752, 7 Jan 62.

7 Jan 62

In accordance with instructions that he present a personal message from Assistant Secretary Harriman, Sullivan saw Pushkin at Geneva and informed him that: 1) US attempts to force Boun Oum and Phoumi into sincere negotiations might require the withholding of aid and that, in fact, as "Pushkin has probably noticed," the January financial subsidy had not been deposited and would not be until Boun Oum agreed to meet the other Princes in Geneva; 2) since such pressure would weaken the RLG vis-a-vis the Pathet Lao, "we will need assurances from Pushkin that the Soviets will see to it that the PL do not undertake military action against FAR positions"; 3) however, if the Pathet Lao should nevertheless launch an unprovoked and large-scale attack, US aid to the RLG would be prompt and on the scale needed for a successful defense.

Pushkin's reaction to what Sullivan described as "an almost unprecedented exposure to the Soviets of our entire policy position," was mixed. Seizing on the statement that the United States would back the RLG against a PL attack, he argued that this invalidated the US position, since the RLG would now have a "'license'" to provoke such an attack. However, Pushkin did mention that the Soviets had halted PL military action in the past and that he felt the present PL policy of standing on the defensive was entirely correct. The conversation ended with Pushkin's assurances that Sullivan's message would be transmitted to Moscow precisely as rendered.

Sullivan concluded, as did MacDonald, whom he had been empowered to inform of the conversation, that the Soviets favored a defensive posture by the PL and that Pushkin's remarks on this score constituted "a tentative assurance that no attacks will be launched."

(S) Msgs, SecState to Geneva, FECON 685, 6 Jan 62; Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1011, 7 Jan 62.

9 Jan 62

Ambassador Brown submitted to the Secretary of State two further ideas developed during his review with the Country Team of all possible ways of breaking the deadlock in negotiations for a coalition government in Laos (see item 5 January 1962). The second of these he expressed briefly. "We might as last resort try to pressure Souvanna and Souphanouvong to accept King as Prime Minister, in which case Phoumi has said he would agree to Souvanna's holding Defense."

The first idea, admittedly leading only to an interim arrangement, required greater explanation. Basically, it elaborated upon a thought expressed by Souvanna in November 1961, when he had looked forward to "establishing his provisional government in Luang Prabang, but with Vientiane and Khang Khay continuing as administrative centers of government with a Vice

Premier in each place." Brown listed the essential features as follows:

1) Provisional coalition government under Souvanna as Prime Minister would be set up in Luang Prabang with Souvanna as Defense Minister and Pheng Phongsavan as Interior Minister. Government composition would be along lines suggested by Souvanna at Vientiane. Cabinet ministers, at least those from center group, would also establish their seats of office in Luang Prabang.

2) Phoumi and Souphanouvong would remain in Vientiane and Khang Khay respectively, each designated Deputy Prime Minister.

3) Defense and Interior Ministers in Luang Prabang would each have two deputies, one in Vientiane and one in Khang Khay. Vientiane deputy ministers could be Phoumi and Leuan respectively, with Khang Khay deputies to be chosen by PL.

4) Existing administrative structures controlled from Vientiane and Khang Khay would initially be left provisionally in place as provided in Zurich agreement.

5) Other important ministries in Luang Prabang could also have deputy ministers (secretaries of state) in Vientiane and Khang Khay answerable in first instance to Deputy Prime Ministers in these two cities. . . .

6) All US and other aid would be channeled through central government at Luang Prabang. . . .

Brown recognized that the scheme "bristles with practical difficulties" and might even result in permanent partition of Laos. Still it seemed to him to offer certain advantages. It would avoid the disintegration of the RLG and FAR that might result from the application of severe US sanctions against Phoumi over an extended period. There was reason to believe the arrangement would be negotiable. If successful, it would produce a single legal government that could promptly send a delegation to Geneva with full authority to issue the declaration of Laotian neutrality and sign the Geneva agreement. The central government in Luang Prabang, despite its provisional character, could begin immediately to integrate the country, "possibly starting with consolidation of various public services and moving without too much delay into unification [of] armed forces and police and demobilization of excess. Problem of unifying Laos would thus be removed from battlefield and three prince slugging match to practical discussions among politicians and technicians." Finally, the arrangement would make it possible, if Phoumi and Souvanna proved willing, for the two "to work together over a period to develop Souvanna's political party, and perhaps develop a real alliance against the PL."

Ambassador Brown described the objective of this policy as "promotion of phased integration of [the] country by patient negotiations among Lao which might even continue for years." It would be compatible with the "Lao penchant for inexact politics based primarily on personal relationships."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 960, 9 Jan 62.

9 Jan 62

Ambassador Gavin informed the Secretary of State of various comments made by Souvanna to French and British officials in Paris. The Prince declared that, since Phoumi obviously sought to avoid a meeting of the three Princes, he had decided to give the US time in which to exert pressure on Phoumi. Souvanna, however, had heard reports "Pentagon" were offering advice to the RLG different from that given by the Department of State. The UK Ambassador replied that accounts of differences in US policy regarding Laos were greatly exaggerated and counseled Souvanna to be patient. Souvanna, however, appeared concerned that the US might fail, either because of these internal differences or because of actions by Thailand and South Viet Nam, to convince Phoumi that he should cooperate. The Prince noted that he had stressed to Gavin the need for the US to control its Asian allies. According to British diplomats, Souvanna seemed most concerned about Thailand's supporting Phoumi and interpreted a recent rise in the value of the kip as evidence that such support was indeed being given. A British Embassy officer, however, reassured him that the kip, which had declined too far in value, was merely stabilizing itself.

Souvanna also expressed concern that South Viet Nam and Thailand might withdraw from the Geneva Conference. The UK Ambassador responded to the Prince's statement by suggesting that the Co-Chairmen go to Laos to assist in the stalled negotiations, thus prolonging the Conference. Souvanna "took to the idea," suggesting that King Savang might regard it as more proper for the kingdom's problems to be discussed in Laos than at Geneva.

The British raised with Souvanna the subject of the demobilization of the Pathet Lao. The Prince indicated that he had discussed the problem, which he did not consider insuperable, with Souphanouvong and other leaders of the Pathet Lao. They had agreed to demobilize if Phoumi did likewise and if early elections were held. Although Souvanna at one time assured the UK Ambassador that he would not hold elections while the factions "had guns in their hands," he later spoke of holding elections after a "partial demobilization."

Souvanna thereupon expressed his belief that Communist China not only agreed with Russia regarding Laos but also needed peace because of internal problems. He contended that, under such circumstances, he could gain for the kingdom ten years of stability, after which Laos would be safe from Communism. Not only could he "play off" China against Russia, he also could "short-circuit" North Viet Nam by appealing directly to either of the other two Communist powers. Souvanna also gave categorical assurance

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that he would call upon the ICC to halt Viet Minh infiltration through Laos into South Viet Nam.

In conversations with the French, Souvanna "remained a little fuzzy" regarding demobilization and the timing of elections. Nevertheless, he did suggest that the factions be represented in a 15,000-man unified Army in proportion to the number of cabinet portfolios held by each group. He again expressed concern (see item 6 January 1962) that Boun Oum would not bring Phoumi to Geneva. He dismissed questions regarding ICC participation in the unification of the factional armies on the ground that the integration of forces was a domestic matter. He also spurned Sihanouk's suggestion that the Princes meet in Cambodia.

Finally, Souvanna repeated his earlier statements (see items 4 and 5 January 1962) about Soviet aid and admitted receiving assistance from North Viet Nam. He denied, however, that either the Soviets or Communist Chinese were represented at Xieng Khouang, but he did not state his future plans regarding these nations.

(S) Msgs, Paris to SecState, 3385, 9 Jan 62; 3417, 11 Jan 62.

9 Jan 62 In accordance with suggestions by the US, UK, and French delegations at Geneva, a French representative in Paris agreed to propose the following to Souvanna on 9 January: 1) that one of his first acts upon becoming Prime Minister of a government of national union should be the issuance of a cease-fire proclamation which would record his intention of unifying the Laotian armed forces, provide against political reprisals, and, "hopefully," refer to the RLG's intention of keeping the Conference Co-Chairmen informed of the progress made in integrating the armed forces; 2) that he make no direct reference to SEATO in the neutrality declaration; and 3) that he begin, with French assistance, drafting the Lao neutrality declaration while in Paris.

It was reported that Souvanna was willing to consider a cease-fire proclamation but was non-committal regarding the contents. Although at first utterly opposed to the ICC having integration of the armed forces as one of its functions, he later admitted that integration was a "matter of concern" for the ICC. He agreed to omit a reference to SEATO. No discussion of the neutrality declaration took place.

(C) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1014, 9 Jan 62; CONFE 1021, 10 Jan 62.

9 Jan 62 Ambassador Young delivered an informal memorandum to Thai Prime Minister Sarit summarizing the US position on Laos. For his part, Sarit seemed to disapprove a Geneva meeting of the three Princes and any surrender of the Interior and Defense posts to Souvanna. He did not, however, indicate whether he would or would not try to prevent either action. Sarit remarked that he had never really agreed with US policy on Laos but had never interfered in the past. Fatalistically, he concluded the discussion

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on Laos by telling the Ambassador to "go ahead and let things deteriorate in your own way."

Ambassador Young commented that this discussion had once again highlighted the basic difference of opinion regarding Souvanna that existed between Thailand and the US. Sarit reiterated the Thai belief that erection of a Souvanna government would mean surrender of Laos to the Communists. Thailand would then be subject to Communist infiltration across a long frontier, "just as Laos and Viet Nam have been." Sarit wished to know what plans the United States had for retrieving the situation if it became clear that the Souvanna solution was leading to a Communist take-over of Laos. Further, should the Communists come to dominate Laos, what US support would be available to Thailand in resisting the inevitable infiltration?

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 969, 970, 9 Jan 62.

9 Jan 62 In reply to a request from the JCS for specific information regarding the capabilities of the opposing forces in Laos, urgently needed for the preparation of a SNIE, CINCPAC forwarded a message he had received from CHMAAG Laos, estimating that North Vietnamese troops in Laos consisted of 2 headquarters, 5 to 6 infantry battalions, and 2 infantry companies, with a total strength of 3,000 to 4,000, plus an additional 2,400 advisors (including gunners and radar operators) with Pathet Lao and Kong Le units. He estimated that since the end of the rainy season in September 1961 an average of 195 tons of supplies per week had been flown into Laos from North Viet Nam, plus an additional total of at least 2200 tons trucked over Route 7 from 15 November to 15 January and an indeterminable amount over Routes 8 and 12. Communist forces, according to Chief MAAG, no longer possessed the strength to launch a series of successful attacks either simultaneously or in rapid sequence nor the mobility to shift forces rapidly so as to mass overwhelming superiority at several strategic areas in sequence. The enemy did have the capability, however, of rapid and overwhelming reinforcement from across the North Viet Nam border with minimum danger of detection in areas where it might choose to attack.

CINCPAC referred the JCS to his message of 5 January (see item) and in reply to the specific questions of the JCS stated that of the enemy forces estimated in CHMAAG's message, 5 artillery/mortar batteries and 3 AA batteries were believed composed principally of North Vietnamese in addition to part of an engineer battalion; that since the cease-fire the enemy's consumption of supplies had about equalled the amount received, i.e., the 30-day stockpile estimated at the time of the cease-fire was being maintained; that if hostilities were resumed, the Meo alone could not stop the supply support of the Pathet Lao-Kong Le forces, but that it was extremely vulnerable to air attack; that Meo activities should be recognized for what they were--hit and run blows that were disruptive only and mostly concentrated in the Plane des Jarres area--and should not be overestimated, but nevertheless their capabilities had not been fully exploited; that he agreed with the assessment of enemy capabilities in the message from CHMAAG and concurred in the latter's view that "time

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is on our side," but that the balance could be changed by North Vietnamese intervention so that "we must be ready and willing to fight . . . , if all other measures fail."

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 2821, 062057Z Jan 62; (TS) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, 071730Z Jan 62 (readdressed to JCS, 092117Z); (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 092052Z Jan 62.

9 Jan 62 In response to a request of the Department of the Army, the US Army Attache (USARMA) in Vientiane submitted his estimate of the military capability of the opposing forces in Laos. Speaking with the concurrence of CHMAAG Laos, USARMA stated that FAR morale and combat effectiveness had improved markedly since the cease-fire. The relatively quiet conditions had enabled the FAR to devote its time effectively to training for the first time. The expansion of the MAAG into lower echelons of the FAR had been particularly effective in instilling some spirit into the Lao troops, and the various formal training courses in leadership and technical skills were turning out personnel that were badly needed. Successful small unit operations had shown increased FAR effectiveness and had given FAR officers and men some confidence in their own abilities. Even in those operations that did not succeed, the FAR had demonstrated an ability to regroup, reorganize, and continue operations with an "aggressive-offensive" attitude. A new FAR desire to take the offensive had, in fact, given CHMAAG "no end of difficulty" in his attempts to dissuade the Lao from committing obvious cease-fire violations. Coupling all these gains in FAR effectiveness with the improvements made since the cease-fire in the status of FAR equipment and weapons, USARMA concluded that, despite similar efforts on the part of the enemy, the FAR had improved more than its opposition.

There was not enough evidence to judge the exact nature and intensity of the enemy programs, but Bloc equipment had undoubtedly continued to flow into enemy territory--40 to 50 armored cars had recently appeared on the Plaine des Jarres--and some troops had received artillery training in North Viet Nam. However, difficulties in transportation and the very thinness of enemy ranks made it unlikely that any substantial number of the approximately one-third of the enemy who were untrained recruits had left Laos for extensive training. There were, moreover, indications that enemy morale was no better than fair. Meo harassments, poor living conditions, RLG psychological warfare, disenchantment with Communist ideology, and, among the neutralist troops, impatience for a political settlement: these among others were factors that contributed to sagging morale and frictions between the Kong Le and Pathet Lao units.

USARMA then estimated FAR and RLG capabilities in specific military and political situations, as follows:

1. If the enemy was not further reinforced by Viet Minh cadres and if MAAG advisers remained with FAR units, the FAR could hold its ground against the enemy, except possibly in the Thakhek area.

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2. The FAR did not yet have the ability to interdict Routes 8, 9, and 12--three principal east-west routes in the Laotian panhandle--as it now did Route 7 in the Plaines des Jarres. If present guerrilla operations were expanded, however, the FAR might in time, with the assistance of SVN troops, be able to successfully extend its operations along these roads.

3. If the special security forces of Colonel Siho remained in the Vientiane area, the RLG had little to fear from coup attempts or sabotage.

4. Because the FAR felt that it was improving with time and US advice, the RLG led by Phoumi could survive prolonged, inconclusive combat. Furthermore, the longer the present state of truce continued, the better the FAR would become. Additionally, the Lao people were losing their confidence in Souvanna as he demonstrated more and more his close association with Souphanouvong. The RLG would probably, therefore, gain political support as well as military strength as time passed.

5. It was not probable that either the FAR or the enemy could mount a surprise military campaign without the other gaining prior knowledge; the FAR might, however, have a chance of achieving surprise if it conducted an operation from southern Laos.

USARMA believed, in short, that the FAR-Meo forces had definitely improved vis-a-vis their opposition. They could hold the enemy, as the enemy was presently constituted, but they could not successfully engage an enemy reinforced by additional Communist Bloc troops.

(S) Msg, USARMA Vientiane to DA, DA IN 191004, 9 Jan 62.

10 Jan 62

During a luncheon given for Souvanna by Ambassador Gavin, the Prince, after referring to the RLG's defiance of US economic pressures, remarked that the US should remember to exert appropriate pressures on Thailand and South Viet Nam. He then repeated his frequently stated advice that the US should continue to pay the FAR.

Secretary Rusk's hopes that Souvanna would be sympathetic toward Boun Oum and Phoumi during any Geneva meeting (see item 7 January 1962) were dashed. When Gavin offered this suggestion, Souvanna replied with a bitter recital of Boun Oum's discourtesy at Vientiane and a lengthy commentary on Boun Oum's and Phoumi's love of ostentation.

After Gavin had indicated that the US was prepared to discuss the aid that would be given a Souvanna government, the Prince expressed interest and enumerated such basic needs as schools and hospitals. Souvanna urged that, wherever possible, US aid should be in the form of a specific project. He preferred this course to the turning over of funds, with the attendant danger of "diversion by Lao and Americans." He also noted that he had asked North Viet Nam for specialists who would study the possible resettlement of the Montagnards.

The Prince stated that he had warned Kong Le and the Pathet Lao that, if they violated the cease-fire, he would refuse to return to Laos. The MAAG, he hoped, would stop "inciting the Meo" to attack villages in the Xieng Khouang area. The populace, he continued, had grown disenchanted with the Pathet Lao, and at least one PL battalion had sought to defect to him. To exploit popular sentiments, Souvanna, to the extent allowed by limited funds, had dispatched representatives to take over local administration and thus extend his influence.

When asked about elections, the Prince merely declared that no ballots should be cast while the factions retained their arms. In any free election, he declared, he could not fail to win, since 80 per cent of the citizenry supported him.

Souvanna dismissed as RLG propaganda reports that Chinese and Viet Minh troops were present in Laos. The Prince further claimed that, while in Vientiane, he had learned that Phoumi was preparing to attack Tha Thom, Muong Sai, and along Highway 12. This information, he continued, had been forwarded to the ICC. The Prince added that, after his departure from Vientiane, the RLG had made many arrests, presumably among his followers.

In reply to questions about Sino-Soviet differences, Souvanna said that he was convinced that both nations desired a truly neutral Laos. He would, however, be willing to "play the card of Sino-Soviet rivalry in the Far East" in order to maintain the independence of the kingdom.

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3402, 10 Jan 62.

10 Jan 62 At the conclusion of an extended exchange of messages among the State Department, the US Geneva delegation, and the US Embassy at Vientiane, the Department described as "non-negotiable" the proposals that Ambassador Brown had made on 28 December 1961 concerning an enlarged role for the ICC in the integration of the Lao armed forces. Discussions between the US Geneva delegation and Quinim indicated that Souvanna would object to certain of the proposals, while the permanent status that the proposals tacitly assigned to the ICC would, so the US Geneva delegation had stated, be resisted by the Communist states and by India and Canada as well.

The State Department followed with a specific proposal which would deal with the ICC question and would, hopefully, be included in the neutrality declaration to be signed by the Laotian government:

The Government of Laos undertakes, with such assistance from the International Control Commission as the Government of Laos may deem necessary, to bring about the unification of the various armed forces in Laos into a single national army and the demobilization of all forces in excess of the requirements of this national army in order that the continued existence of such excess forces shall not constitute a threat to the maintenance of the cease-fire.

Should this be unacceptable, reference to the ICC's function would be eliminated, although the State Department voiced the hope that Souvanna would concur in the US interpretation that the ICC might nevertheless assist as requested.

(C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 896, 28 Dec 61; Geneva to SecState, CONF 987, 29 Dec 61; SecState to Geneva, FECON 694, 10 Jan 62.

10 Jan 62 The UK Foreign Office defined as "inappropriate" the proposal of 9 January (see item) concerning the drafting of a RLG neutrality declaration in Paris with French assistance, and suggested instead that the US, UK, and French delegations at Geneva handle the matter jointly, on the basis of the foreign policy sections of the Zurich communique (see item 22 June 1961). The US delegation was authorized by the State Department to participate on this basis.

(Canadian representatives joined the drafting group on 12 January.)

(C) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1021, 10 Jan 62; SecState to Geneva, FECON 694, 10 Jan 62; (S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1032, 12 Jan 62.

10 Jan 62 Ambassador Young reported to the Secretary of State on the growing pessimism and disappointment in Thailand over the US course of action in Laos. Thai military leaders had become extremely critical regarding US treatment of Phoumi and the failure of the US to consult with its major ally in SEA on the Lao problem. The Ambassador quoted the Chief of Staff, Supreme Command, an outspoken friend of the US, as urging Young to "talk some sense to the US Government"; otherwise Thailand would have to take a new look at its pro-Western policy.

The Ambassador also quoted a Thai editorial critical of US policy in Laos which ended: "Thailand, on the other hand, would prefer Laos partitioned to having pro-Communist coalition government or coalition government dominated by pro-Communist elements."

(C) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 974, 10 Jan 62.

10 Jan 62 Continuing the development of US policy for furnishing aid to a future neutral government of Laos (see item 22 December 1961), the Secretary of State forwarded draft guidance for military assistance planning to the Embassy in Vientiane. According to the Secretary, US relations with a Souvanna regime would be radically different from relations with past and present Lao governments; this difference would be particularly marked in the area of military assistance. The proposed Geneva Agreement and past US policy would "limit drastically" the US role in Lao military affairs. Any US action that seemed to be an attempt to maintain the present US position in Laos would make Souvanna suspicious, would bring on a strong Pathet Lao reaction, and would thereby jeopardize the political and economic programs which, the Secretary emphasized, would be the principal US efforts to ensure the neutrality and independence of the new government.

Such military assistance as might be furnished at the RLG's request would have to harmonize with these political and economic programs.

The Secretary believed that, since large quantities of military equipment were already in Laos, the Souvanna government would initially need little more than "force maintenance material" in the way of military assistance. Even for this limited assistance, however, a new US-Lao agreement would have to be negotiated if the Geneva Agreement prohibited US civilian military advisors in Laos. If the US was thereby barred from inspecting the uses to which its assistance funds and equipment were put, then military assistance could be furnished only by Presidential waiver under Section 614 of the Foreign Assistance Act [Public Law 87-195, 87th Congress, S.1983, 4 September 1961. Section 614 empowered the President to expend certain funds for military assistance "without regard to the requirements of the Act."]

Another problem the US would encounter in dealing with the Souvanna government would be the retrieving of military equipment that the US and RLG considered surplus to the needs of the FAR. The RLG was obligated by the terms of acquisition to consult the US in the disposal of surplus military assistance equipment, but the Secretary anticipated that the subject would be a difficult one to broach at the outset of negotiations. He noted that the US would probably desire to turn some items of surplus equipment over to the Lao police forces and the ICC.

Looking forward to the first meeting of US representatives with Souvanna following formation of his government, the Secretary indicated that it would be important to impress Souvanna clearly on that occasion with the understanding that the US had no desire to maintain its previous dominant role in Lao military affairs. The US wished only to do what Souvanna thought would assist him in following a neutral and independent policy. The US might assure Souvanna initially, for instance, that the MAAG would be withdrawn in accordance with the Geneva Agreement. US representatives should take no initiative in offering military assistance, but at the same time, they should avoid any implication that the US would deny assistance to the FAR. If Souvanna asked what the US was prepared to do, he should be told that the US believed the RLG would need only "force maintenance material" in the immediate future and that, at any rate, the first step toward the resumption of US assistance should be joint RLG-US discussions to determine the exact nature of the assistance needed by the RLG and the legal provisions for it, and to designate surplus equipment and decide its disposition.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, CA-782, 10 Jan 62.

10 Jan 62 Ambassador Brown received word that Boun Oum was sending a letter accepting the invitation of the Co-Chairmen to attend a meeting of the three Princes in Geneva, and that Phoumi was to be a member of the RLG delegation. Text of the letter was to be released the following day.

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Although there was a hopeful aspect to the fact that the three Princes were now scheduled to meet at Geneva, Ambassador Brown warned that Phoumi's current attitude was one of "determination to squeeze Souvanna out of the picture" and that a showdown with him might still become necessary. The Ambassador had heard that Boun Oum planned to declare at Geneva that Souvanna had failed in his mission to form a cabinet and that the RLG no longer considered him Premier-designate. Further, it was understood that Phoumi intended to convene the National Congress to vote full powers to the King. By the time Boun Oum made his projected declaration, Phoumi hoped to have in hand a letter from the King summoning the three Princes to Luang Prabang. The next step in Phoumi's scheme was to have the King assume active direction of a government.

(OUO) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 969, 10 Jan 62;
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 965, 10 Jan 62.

11 Jan 62 Special National Intelligence Estimate 58-62 evaluated the relative military capabilities of opposing forces in Laos. Reflecting the earlier reports of CHMAAG Laos, [REDACTED] USARMA Vientiane, and CINCPAC (see items 28 December 1961 and 2, 5, and 9 January 1962) the SNIE reported that both government and antigovernment forces had increased their capabilities during the cease-fire, but that the government forces had improved more than their foes.

The government forces had been defeated and demoralized and were near collapse in May 1961. Since then, however, they had grown to a strength of 71,500 men: 51,500 regular army, 11,000 auto defense, and 9,000 Meo guerrillas. They were much better trained and equipped than they had been at the time of the cease-fire, and they had acquired some self-confidence. By reason of extensive technical, logistical, and communications support from US, Thai, and Filipino personnel, moreover, they probably had gained an important advantage over the enemy in supply and mobility. Regular army units had been "stiffened" in selective instances by US trainers, and the Meo tribesmen had become an effective guerrilla force in the enemy rear.

The antigovernment forces had also been strengthened. Their size had increased from 20,000 to 34,000: 19,000 Pathet Lao, 6,000 Kong Le, 4,000 Kham Ouane, 1,600 Viet Minh cadres, and 3,500 Viet Minh combat troops. The training facilities for antigovernment forces were limited, however, and many of the new troops, particularly those in Kong Le and Kham Ouane forces, were probably inadequately trained. In addition, there was evidence of some friction between the Kong Le and Kham Ouane forces on the one hand and Pathet Lao on the other because of inequities in the distribution of supplies and jealousy regarding command responsibilities. The antigovernment forces had received considerable additional equipment from the Communist Bloc, most notably 40 to 50 light amphibious tanks, suitable for defending the Plaine des Jarres and for limited use elsewhere.

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Complicating any assessment of the over-all capability of either side was the wide variation in the effectiveness of different units on the same side; each force had its poor and elite units. The critical weaknesses of the government forces had been lack of motivation, unstable morale, and poor leadership. Whether or not these weaknesses had been successfully remedied by training programs and recent small-scale military successes was not yet known; these forces had not yet undergone the strain of serious combat. In past times of quiet or success their morale had appeared to be high, only to dissolve in the face of adversity. Poor morale was not a critical weakness among the antigovernment forces. The Pathet Lao had maintained discipline and relatively good effectiveness for a number of years, through successes and failures. Their morale probably remained good, as probably did the morale and effectiveness of the Viet Minh units. The Kong Le and Kham Ouane forces, however, maintained only "spotty" morale; probably only a few of these units would perform well.

Yet another factor in estimating effectiveness, this one currently working to the advantage of the government forces, was the deployment and mission of forces. The government forces, with greatly reduced territory to control, could concentrate their strength, maintain some reserves, and establish short and reasonably dependable lines of communication. The antigovernment forces, on the other hand, in seeking to control large and widely separated areas in Laos, had increased their logistical problems, lessened their mobility, and diffused their strength. In their rear areas, they had poor lines of lateral communication, some of which were harassed by the Meo guerrillas.

A final consideration advanced by the SNIE was that the Laotian terrain and other difficulties in conducting conventional military operations in Laos would make it relatively easy for either side to deny control of territory to the other.

Bearing all of the above factors in mind and assuming that there would be no change in the levels of aid and assistance given the two sides by their respective sponsors, the SNIE then hypothesized as follows:

1. If the antigovernment forces concentrated an attack upon an important government stronghold, including "almost any one of the major towns along the Mekong," they could probably capture their objective, but they could not hold it against a determined government counterattack.

2. Similarly, the government forces could make initial gains in an offensive on the Tha Thom-Xieng Khouang perimeter or in southern Laos. If the Pathet Lao and Kong Le troops were defeated by a sustained government attack, they would quickly revert to guerrilla tactics and continue to contest government authority in widespread areas. In this event, the government forces could not establish firm control of these areas. Specifically, the government would not be able to consolidate its hold on the Plaine des Jarres, the Nhommarath-Mahaxay area, or the Tchepone area.

On balance, the SNIE concluded, the government forces would have a slight edge if fighting were resumed on a pattern comparable to that prior to the cease-fire, intensified only by the strengthening of both sides. Furthermore, this edge would increase as time went on if the military situation remained quiet and if the recent rates of improvement of the two sides continued. The antigovernment forces continued, however, to have the greater guerrilla warfare capability. Additionally, if at any time the government forces threatened areas considered "critical" by the Communists, the antigovernment forces would be quickly and effectively reinforced from North Viet Nam in whatever degree necessary to the protection of the threatened area.

(See item 31 January 1962 for a significant modification of the above conclusions.)

(S) SNIE 58-62, 11 Jan 62.

11 Jan 62 CHMAAG Laos reported to CINCPAC that the FAR-MAAG program to deactivate approximately 8,000 FAR troops (see item 2 December 1961) would probably be cast aside by Phoumi because of the US campaign to force him to cooperate in negotiations for a coalition government. CHMAAG related that during December 1961 the Ministry of Defense had designated certain FAR units for deactivation, without announcing an effective date. CHMAAG felt that more recently Phoumi had begun to consider continuing his resistance even if US aid was withdrawn, by returning his soldiers, still armed, to their villages where they would continue to fight for him until such time as he could resume full support for them. Accordingly, CHMAAG expected that Phoumi would in the future pay only lip service to the deactivation plan; that is, that Phoumi would remove units from the FAR force structure, and therefore from MAP support, but would continue them in existence, paying them from "other sources" and supplying them from MAP stocks. The Ministry of Defense had, in fact, already stated that the deactivated troops would continue to draw pay. CHMAAG assured CINCPAC that he would continue to exert every effort to convince Phoumi that the FAR should institute a "true reduction in force" to MAP-approved levels, but he observed that success was not probable while the current US-RLG friction continued.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, 111305Z Jan 62.

11 Jan 62 Ambassador Gavin passed on to the Secretary of State information received by Manac'h from an intelligence source. According to this French report, Phoumi's forces were preparing to attack Mahaxay in central Laos and Tchepone to the south. The French also claimed that the RLG was considering acts of violence against Americans, if the US pressure on Phoumi were maintained. Arrests of neutralists in Vientiane had already begun, and the population was nervous.

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3417, 11 Jan 62.

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Jan 62

[REDACTED] CHMAAG Laos recommended [REDACTED] on 11 January that they be authorized to arm Kha resistance forces from US stocks in Thailand controlled by the Department of Defense, and that the costs of creating such a force be counted as part of

the program of supporting the Meo. The US officials reported that Phoumi had again approved the concept of creating a Kha resistance movement; the Lao leader claimed, however, that he would be unable to provide equipment from FAR stocks. The news of the arming of the first 100-man Kha unit by the MAAG (see item 22 December 1961) had already spread among the Kha villagers, CHMAAG [redacted] reported further, and the MAAG already had special forces teams ready to train more Kha. This momentum should not be lost. Kha operations could help to secure important areas in southern Laos. The Laos Country Team approved the creation of a Kha resistance program; only approval from Washington was lacking.

On 13 January, the Department of Defense [redacted] informed [redacted] that up to 300 Kha tribesmen could be armed in the manner recommended, for the purpose of interdicting Viet Cong trails into South Viet Nam. The use of up to one million kip and the drawing of necessary arms from US stockpiles in Thailand were also approved. (See item 25 January 1962.) [redacted]

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Jan 62

According to the J-3 Southeast Asia Situation Report of this date, "excellent relationships" were reported by CHMAAG Laos to be prevailing between US Special Forces advisors and FAR units, with the FAR accepting advisors down to company and platoon levels in some cases. The only exception was in the 5th Military Region, the headquarters of which were at Vientiane, where relations between the local MAAG advisor and the regional commander had been "somewhat stymied" by news that all US military aid had been stopped.

There had been no significant change in military activity, according to the Situation Report, except for stiffening enemy opposition in the Muong Sai area, which had necessitated the despatch of two companies to reinforce the FAR units in that area.

Information provided by CHMAAG a week later disclosed that this action near Muong Sai, a Pathet Lao stronghold and supply depot, had been on a larger scale than any other for several months past, and that it had resulted in a serious setback for the FAR. Sweeping up the Nam Beng Valley, elements of Group Mobile 11 (including the 3rd Infantry Battalion and the 15th Volunteer Battalion) encountered stiff enemy resistance on 7-8 January about 15 miles from Muong Sai. An enemy counterattack by an estimated three battalions (two Pathet Lao and one North Vietnamese), totalling about 1,000 men, dispersed the FAR units and forced them to withdraw hastily towards the Mekong River, about 80 miles in a straight-line distance from Muong Sai. By 14 January the FAR troops had crossed the Mekong into Sayaboury province, where the two battalions spent the remainder of the month being reorganized and refitted.

(TS-NOFORN) J-3, Southeast Asia Sitreps #2-62, 11 Jan #3-62, 18 Jan, #4-62, 25 Jan 62; (S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos

to CINCPAC, JCS, et al., 171618Z Jan 62, DA IN 193939;
(S-NOFORN) Msg, CINCUSARPAC to AIG 731, et al., 192231Z
Jan 62, DA IN 194182; (S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to
CINCPAC, JCS, et al., 191740Z Jan 62, DA IN 194614.

- 12 Jan 62. The US January cash grant to the RLG was deposited.
Suspension of the sale of foreign exchange by the Laotian
National Bank remained in effect.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1008, 17 Jan 62.

- 12 Jan 62 M. Manac'h of the French Foreign Office and Souvanna
exchanged views regarding various aspects of the Zurich
communique (see item 22 June 1961). The principal subject
discussed was the integration of the factional armies, but
the prohibition of reprisals and the statement on alliances
to be included in the neutrality declaration also were
mentioned. Souvanna, after observing that the question
of alliances was "virtually recognized," raised no objections
to French views concerning the prohibition of reprisals and
the formation of a unified Army. The Prince seemed more
positive than he had been in his last conversation with
Manac'h (see item 9 January 1962).

Souvanna stated that demobilization should take place
before elections were held, since the presence of factional
armed forces would stifle the democratic process.
Approximately six to seven months would elapse between the
installation of the coalition and the election of a government
to succeed it. During this interval three Secretaries of
State for Defense, one from each contending faction, would
supervise the process of demobilization. The cadre of the
unified Army would be selected from among the Lao career
soldiers, while existing laws requiring military service
by the citizenry could fill the ranks of the reconstituted
force. Souvanna, Manac'h believed, was aware of the economic
and social problems that would arise from the demobilization
of the factional armies.

Since Souvanna desired that the new Army "be what it
was before the beginning of the present troubles so Laos
would not again fall under military dictatorship," the
kingdom also would require the services of a gendarmerie
and a police force. The gendarmerie would be responsible
for military security and would guarantee the loyalty of
the Army. The police force, composed of civilians and under
control of the Minister of Interior, would serve local
civilian authority by, among other things, guarding against
subversion.

Souvanna, when questioned about French instructors for
the unified Army, stated that it would be premature to discuss
the matter at this time. He did, however, agree to give
the French ample time to plan for such activity. The Prince
seemed confident that there would be no difficulty in
negotiating the type of Lao-French agreement called for in
the Geneva Protocol.

Souvanna, after listening as Manac'h likened North
and South Viet Nam to the two Germanies, refused to commit
himself regarding the recognition of North Viet Nam.
Manac'h believed that this problem could best be dealt
with at Geneva.

(S) Msgs, Paris to SecState, 3445, 13 Jan 62; 3456,
15 Jan 62.

12 Jan 62 After being informed by MacDonald that he and Co-Chairman Pushkin had discussed the idea of holding a plenary session of the Geneva Conference with the three Princes present, Sullivan expressed strong US opposition to this idea, arguing that a public forum might simply lead to propaganda speeches by the Princes. "After some fairly blunt exchanges," Sullivan and MacDonald worked out a plan, of which MacDonald was to inform Pushkin, for ensuring that the forthcoming meetings of the Princes were conducted with a minimum of public friction and opportunities for propaganda and that time would be available for the US delegation to exert pressure on Boun Oum and Phoumi, for the Co-Chairmen to consult on procedural matters, and for Assistant Secretary Harriman (arriving in Geneva on 14 January) to meet with Pushkin.
(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1034, 12 Jan 62.

12 Jan 62 Ambassador Young delivered a letter to Prime Minister Sarit, an authorized, full-scale exposition of US policy on Laos. The letter stated that the US continued to seek a stable, effective, and independent government in Laos while insisting upon adequate safeguards for the interests of the Free World, including Thailand. In this connection Ambassador Young was authorized to reiterate his government's position as conveyed to Sarit on 3 July 1961. The US wish to keep negotiations on Laos open until a peaceful solution was reached. At the same time the US was determined to avoid unacceptable concessions and would not approve any arrangement that would facilitate the Communist domination of Laos. The Ambassador was authorized to repeat to Sarit the US position on the composition of a neutral Lao government as outlined in the memorandum of 5 September 1961 (see item).

The US also wanted to assure Thailand that it had never lessened its concern for the problems of SEA and was determined to meet its obligations in that area, as evidenced by its all-out effort in South Viet Nam and increasing military assistance to Thailand. Because Thailand was one of its best friends and closest allies in SEA, the US had given Thailand binding assurances. "Thailand can continue to count on our support under these commitments," the letter continued. In pursuing its present course of action in Laos as long as it saw reasonable chance for achieving an acceptable peaceful settlement, the US intended to maintain the friendship of such a valuable ally as Thailand. The US would continue to emphasize the immediate and long-range security interests of Thailand as defined by the Thai Government.

The US did not believe that the present unstable situation in Laos could continue indefinitely; should hostilities break out, the present government would be incapable of withstanding a major Communist offensive. Thus, the current situation would probably deteriorate in a way directly harmful to Thailand and SEA unless prompt political measures were taken. In particular, the US viewed with concern the threat of Communist infiltration of South Viet Nam and Thailand through Laos. The sooner an effective independent government could be established in Laos and a written promise could be extracted from the USSR respecting

that independent government and its territory, the greater would be the chance for South Viet Nam, with considerable outside aid, to control its Lao frontier and Thailand its northern borders.

The US was satisfied that considerable headway had been made at Geneva in piecing together an acceptable "package" for peaceful settlement. One key to an acceptable political settlement was the establishment within the national coalition of a non-Communist group including General Phoumi in a high civilian post. Another key was to deny sensitive positions in significant ministries to the Communists. The US had agreed to accept Souvanna as Prime Minister if he lived up to certain conditions, and from available evidence he seemed to be trying to satisfy those conditions. If Phoumi insisted on retaining either the Defense or Interior post, however, the other would have to go to the Pathet Lao, a situation inimical to both Thailand and the US. Moreover, a division of these posts between Phoumi and the Pathet Lao would result in an unstable government, increasing the capabilities of the Communists for penetrating and subverting other areas of SEA. The US believed that very positive advantages had been gained at Geneva for the security of SEA, in particular the Soviet guarantee of Lao neutrality. This and other advantages could be lost, however, "by wrong tactics and untimely actions regarding Laos."

(S) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, 960, 7 Jan 62; Bangkok to SecState, 998, 13 Jan 62.

12 Jan 62

In a message

the Laos Country Team recommended that the US continue to expand the local resistance and defense capabilities of the population of northern and central Laos in order to prevent further Pathet Lao encroachments in those areas. This expansion should take place as rapidly as possible without compromising the security of the operation or unduly provoking the enemy. There was little danger, the Country Team thought, of the present RLG ever finding out about such a program. The Country Team sought to justify its recommendation as follows:

1. Whatever the outcome in Laos, whether partition, resumption of hostilities, or successful formation of a coalition government, it would be to the distinct advantage of the US and any non-Communist Lao government if the present Pathet Lao access to, and consolidation of control over, the population of northern and central Laos could be blocked or even reduced. If the Pathet Lao were not prevented at this time from consolidating their hold on these areas, then all later political, psychological or military efforts of any new RLG to recapture these areas would most likely be unsuccessful.

2. The various tribal minorities who comprised the bulk of the population in northern Laos were strongly opposed to the Pathet Lao and Viet Minh and were, furthermore, "not seriously 'separatist'" in their sentiments regarding the present RLG. Neither were they particularly opposed to the Lao neutralists, except insofar as Souvanna was reputed to be bound closely to the Pathet Lao. If these tribesmen were aided now in the defense of their

homes, any new RLG that treated them properly would find them loyal and resistant to Communist agitations and propagandizing.

3. Armed tribesmen would be able to harass the enemy's lines of communications and deny him local sources of supply and intelligence. Conversely, the US and any future RLG would gain valuable intelligence on Pathet Lao and Viet Minh political and military activities in Laos. In addition, the tribesmen along the Lao-DRV border would observe Viet Minh compliance, or lack thereof, with their promise not to infiltrate either Laos or South Viet Nam through Laos.

The Country Team believed that a slightly different emphasis should be given to programs in northern and central Laos, respectively, and presented outline programs for each area.

In northern Luang Prabang province and the Nam Tha area, the primary purpose of the program would be to strengthen local defense capabilities, the will to resist Pathet Lao encroachments, and the willingness to report on enemy activities. The Country Team believed that the issuing of Springfield 1903 rifles would be adequate for these purposes and less expensive than providing the full 100-man weapons units used to arm the Meo. If '03s were available, 5,000 should be shipped to Thailand; 2,500 to be distributed in the northern area of Laos and 2,500 to be held in Thailand for similar subsequent distribution elsewhere. (If these last 2,500 were not used, they could be issued to the Meo as "turn-in weapons" in the event of demobilization. The Country Team did not think that the better weapons actually used by the Meo could be recovered.)

In the Xieng Khouang and Sam Neua provinces, and in central Laos, the purpose of the program would be not only to increase local defense capabilities, but also to increase the existing military resistance of established guerrilla units. For this purpose, [redacted] should be authorized to draw more modern weapons from US stockpiles in Thailand for arming additional tribesmen in the "gradualist" fashion described [redacted] in earlier messages (see item 2 January 1962). The Country Team did not envisage this program as a "recruiting spree," but rather a controlled response to tribal demands for weapons. Thus, new recruits would not be discouraged by a lack of US response to their initiative and the "psychologically vital" momentum of the resistance movement would be maintained.

The Country Team believed itself to be the body best able to determine the proper tempo and areas for expansion. It therefore recommended that it be given the authority to oversee this expansion of the resistance program. (See item 5 February 1962.) [redacted]

13 Jan 62 In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense recommending policies for South Viet Nam, the JCS presented at length their views of the strategic importance of the Southeast Asian mainland. Advancing portions of CINCPAC's appraisal of Communist tactics in Laos as they affected South Viet Nam and Thailand (see item 23 December 1961), which appraisal had already been cited in a JCS policy recommendation on Laos (see item 5 January 1962), the JCS averred that the fall of South Viet Nam would mean the eventual Communist domination of the entire Southeast Asian mainland. The JCS urged several courses of action to counter Communist efforts to take South Viet Nam. They also noted that, if US combat forces eventually had to be introduced into Southeast Asia, the following three factors would be of greatest importance:

1. Any war in Southeast Asia would be a "peninsula and island" campaign. All elements of the US armed forces were particularly well suited for such action by reason of their experiences in World War II and Korea.

2. The Communists could support only limited forces during a war in Southeast Asia, because of logistical and transportation restrictions imposed by nature.

3. The present world military posture of the US was such that existing contingency plans for Southeast Asia could be implemented without unacceptable reduction of the US capability to carry out planned operations in Europe relating to Berlin.

(TS) JCSM-33-62 to SecDef, 13 Jan 62, derived from JCS 2343/70, 13 Jan 62; JMF 9155.3/9105 (30 Nov 61).

13 Jan 62 The Soviet Charge d'Affaires in Washington, Smirnovsky, presented an official statement to Secretary Rusk, complaining that the stubborn attitude of Boun Oum and Phoumi, especially their insistence that their faction receive both the Defense and Interior Ministries in the projected coalition government, was blocking a settlement in Laos. Smirnovsky charged that the United States "has it in its power" to bring Boun Oum and Phoumi to terms.

Secretary Rusk denied that the United States could exercise such control over the RLG, and he rejected some of Smirnovsky's other statements as well. Rusk noted, for instance, that Souphanouvong's statement upon arriving at the last meeting of the Princes had been contentious and had made no contribution to a reasonable spirit of negotiation. He also pointed out that the three Princes had not yet really come to grips with the detailed negotiations necessary to the formation of a coalition government. The "best influence" of all interested Governments would be necessary to maintain the cease-fire and push the negotiations to agreement.

(S) Msg, SecState to Geneva, FECON 701, 13 Jan 62.

14 Jan 62 General Phoumi told the press during a stopover in Bangkok that the US had announced the intention of halting all aid to the RLG if it refused to relinquish the Interior and Defense posts in the coalition government to Souvanna.

Phoumi reiterated his government's policy: the RLG was determined to retain these posts in order to balance the power of the other two parties in the proposed coalition and would maintain this position "at all costs" at Geneva. If US aid were withdrawn, the Lao people would "struggle to survive and live completely independent lives in the future." Phoumi charged Souvanna with the failure of the Vientiane talks (see items 27 and 27-30 December 1961) and insisted that Souvanna should have relinquished his mandate to form a government at that time.

Ambassador Young reported to the Secretary of State that Sarit avoided meeting Boun Oum and Phoumi during their Bangkok stopover because he wished to avoid implicating Thailand in the RLG's intransigent stand. While in Bangkok, the RLG leaders again mentioned the possibility of forming a "King's government" after a royal revocation of Souvanna's mandate. Thanat told Ambassador Young that the Thai Government was now looking into the possibilities of this solution.

If this "King's government" scheme failed, Boun Oum and Phoumi declared themselves ready to move into southern Laos and establish there a government, independent of US aid if necessary. The Thai were reported extremely concerned over being dragged into this "Southern venture" and feared the possibilities of being involved in hostilities without US support. Recognizing that their relations with the US far outweighed any Lao political maneuvering in importance, the Thai were anxious to seek a compromise over Lao internal difficulties.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1002, 15 Jan 62; 1010, 16 Jan 62.

14-18
Jan 62

At Harriman's suggestion, US, UK, French, and Canadian delegates formed a task force at Geneva that met throughout this period to discuss the possible alternative solution proposed by Ambassador Brown on 9 January (see item), involving a government divided among three centers: Souvanna at Luang Prabang, Phoumi at Vientiane, and Souphanouvong at Khang Khay. The reaction was "decidedly negative." All three Allies of the US condemned the proposal as simply preparing the way for a Laotian partition, since the conflicting FAR and PL forces would remain unintegrated while their political counterparts could be expected to score substantial successes in the forthcoming election, each in its own area. Thus the Right and Left would solidify their power at the expense of the neutralist Center under Souvanna.

Various alternative possibilities for a Laotian settlement were then explored. These were: 1) an entirely neutralist government under Souvanna; 2) a government under the King with three Deputy Prime Ministers; 3) outright partition or a confederation loosely grouping the territories of the three factions; and 4) a continuation of the present Laotian situation. All were rejected as being either unrealistic and impractical in light of the current tense situation, or else as being essentially an acceptance of the status quo. The task force therefore concluded that the

only feasible course to pursue was the continuation of the current effort toward a carefully balanced coalition government under Souvanna.

The UK representative then suggested that Phoumi might be influenced to enter into serious negotiations if the Western Ambassadors in Vientiane should begin ostentatiously to develop a "new power combination" on the Right, composed of Phoui Sananikone and the leading FAR generals. The US, French, and Canadian representatives had certain hesitations regarding this gambit but finally agreed to recommend it, although the US representative privately urged the Department of State not to adopt it.

(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1044, 16 Jan 62; CONFE 1050, 18 Jan 62.

15 Jan 62 The Consul General in Hong Kong reported that the Chinese Communist news agency had announced the signing in Khang Khay on 13 January of air transport and highway agreements between the Chinese Communists and the "Kingdom of Laos" (the Souvanna "government"). Under the highway agreement the Chinese Communists engaged to build a road from the Yunnan border to Phong Saly. The air pact provided that air transport companies appointed by both sides would conduct flights, scheduled or irregular, on agreed air routes.

In commenting on this event the Consul General noted that the preliminary agreement on the highway construction project had been reached during Souvanna's visit to Peiping in April 1961. He thought it of interest, however, that both the current agreements and the one of March 1961 regarding a Chinese Communist economic and cultural mission to Laos had been announced while Souvanna was out of the country. He surmised that the aim was to lessen the appearance of involvement by Souvanna with the Chinese Communists. To the Consul General the agreements indicated an increasing Chinese Communist stake in Laos, and he saw in the by-passing of North Viet Nam a determination to enhance Chinese Communist capacity to act independently of both Hanoi and Moscow.

(OUO) Msg, Hong Kong to SecState, 744, 15 Jan 62.

15 Jan 62 Ambassador Gavin reported to the Secretary of State that an officer of the American Embassy had raised with the Viet Nam Desk Officer of the French Foreign Office the question of Lao recognition of both North and South Viet Nam. The desk officer stated that Souvanna had indicated that he had hopes for full relations with both North and South Viet Nam. Manac'h had added that the French Foreign Office would consider what could be done to alter the Prince's views, but he believed that the Government of South Viet Nam would have to accept a compromise.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3454, 15 Jan 62.

15 Jan 62 Harriman reported on a conversation with Pushkin at Geneva in which the latter once again called for a plenary session involving the three Princes (Harriman remained silent regarding this), while optimistically stating that the Princes should be able to reach an agreement in five or six days. Harriman countered that such a view was unrealistic.

He informed Pushkin that, while the United States would not dictate policy to a sovereign state such as Laos, pressure would be exerted if needed and he would expect Soviet assistance in restraining any offensive action by Pathet Lao forces, as Sullivan had previously explained (see item 7 January 1962).

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1039, 15 Jan 62.

15 Jan 62 During a lengthy discussion with UK representatives at Geneva, Boun Oum and especially Phoumi expressed the strongest opposition to relinquishing control of the Defense and Interior Ministries. Phoumi repeatedly opposed Souvanna as Prime Minister, proposing instead that the King receive this post and Souvanna become Minister of Defense. Statements by the UK representatives that this idea was "utterly non-negotiable" had no effect whatever as Phoumi appeared (according to the UK diplomats) to be "obsessed with [his] own power."

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1054, 18 Jan 62.

15 Jan 62 During a discussion of the recent US letter to Prime Minister Sarit (see item 12 January 1962), Foreign Minister Thanat told Ambassador Young that the Thai Government was in agreement with the US on objectives in SEA and had appreciated recent US assurances. US-Thai difficulties arose, however, over the means applied to achieve these objectives in Laos. The crux of the US-Thai differences was their disparate evaluation of Souvanna, his intentions and capabilities. Although long suspicious of Souvanna, the Thai Government had come a long way toward accepting him as Prime Minister of a coalition subject to adequate checks and balances. To give him the Defense and Interior posts without insuring a compensatory balance, however, would be demanding the "suicide" of the RLG. Souvanna had no strength or organization to oppose the Communists or win an election, the Thai believed, even if the US was right in thinking he did really desire neutrality. Moreover, the Thai emphasized that Souvanna had never publicly expressed the views that had so impressed the US with his anti-Communist and anti-Pathet Lao leanings. If Souvanna were to express these views publicly, Thailand might "hedge" somewhat on Souvanna.

Thanat also asked again how the US would retrieve the situation if the Souvanna coalition failed. Coalition under Souvanna could turn out to be worse for Thailand and South Viet Nam than the current uneasy circumstances, he claimed, and the Thai were convinced that the Communists would win the elections sooner or later. They did not feel the US had adequately answered their questions regarding checks and balances in a coalition government and "retrievability."

Thanat also reintroduced the idea of having the Lao King act as chief executive, at least for a temporary period. He acknowledged the Communists would not accept this plan except perhaps under pressure from all sides. Nevertheless, he felt the King's gambit would be feasible, despite Communist opposition, if the Western powers, the Soviet Union, and "Thai neighbors" all united behind it as an expedient to avoid an impasse or breakup of negotiations.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1009, 16 Jan 62.

16 Jan 62 Harriman reported on a conversation with Souvanna at Geneva, in which the former made the following points: 1) Souvanna was assured that the United States wished to support him as Prime Minister of a neutral and independent Laos; 2) the United States favored neutralists receiving the Defense and Interior portfolios and had so informed Phoumi, Boun Oum, and Pushkin; 3) the United States also supported a formula for distribution of cabinet portfolios by which the Pathet Lao would not receive any vital posts and would be evenly balanced by the supporters of Phoumi and Boun Oum, while the neutralist factions controlled a majority of the posts; and 4) Phoumi had been warned that US support would be withdrawn if he either did not negotiate in good faith or launched an attack.

While asking Souvanna for suggestions on how to get Boun Oum to negotiate, Harriman pointed out the danger that overly-drastic measures against the RLG might "impair the balance of forces," and thus weaken Souvanna's position.

Souvanna "appeared to agree." He suggested that US logistical support be denied to the FAR and insisted that the Pathet Lao would not take advantage of the situation. He had warned his own and PL commanders that if they attacked during his absence he would not return to Laos. Souvanna asserted that RLG strategy was to force him to turn in his mandate to the King; the RLG would then call for US assistance in combatting the Pathet Lao.

Harriman urged Souvanna not to become discouraged, authorized him to mention US backing on the Defense-Interior question, and asked him to propose a definite list of cabinet ministers, which would aid the United States in pressuring Boun Oum.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1043, 16 Jan 62.

16 Jan 62 At a Geneva press conference held by Khamphan Panya, a cousin of Boun Oum and a high RLG official, it was announced that Boun Oum would not accept the invitation of the Co-Chairmen to address a plenary session, on the ground that the presence of the other Princes would give them a degree of recognition that constituted an infringement on the sovereignty of the RLG.

In response to questions, Khamphan denied that US aid had ever been used to exert pressure on the RLG, but stated that, should aid be terminated, it "would be natural for countries in the area sharing the same point of view as the RLG to come to its assistance." Discussions might take place in Geneva, he continued, but only in Laos itself could a binding agreement be concluded, and this in turn would be possible only if the RLG was given the Defense and Interior Ministries. He also announced that Boun Oum, "for family and other reasons," had to return to Laos by 21 January, barely five days later.

(U) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1045, 16 Jan 62.

16 Jan 62 Ambassador Young received instructions to deliver a letter from President Kennedy to Prime Minister Sarit concerning US economic aid to Thailand. The President commented at length on the results of Dr. Howard Bowen's economic

mission to Thailand, characterizing it as a "new and improved basis" for joint cooperation in the economic development of Thailand. The President also detailed several specific proposals for expanded US aid efforts in Thailand. He informed Sarit that the US had approved the recent Thai loan application and was ready to begin several Thai irrigation projects immediately.

(On 19 January, the Ambassador reported that the President's letter had been delivered to Sarit.)

(C) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1006, 16 Jan 62; (S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1042, 19 Jan 62.

16 Jan 62 Ambassador Young reported to the Secretary of State a conversation with Pote Sarasin, the Secretary General of SEATO. Pote had assured Young "as categorically as he could" that Sarit was not encouraging Phoumi to resist US advice or break up the Lao negotiations. Since Sarit remained in general sympathy with Phoumi's views regarding Souvanna's neutrality and the question of the Defense and Interior posts, however, he could not be expected to contradict Phoumi on these matters.

Pote also discussed Thailand's major concern: its relationship with the US and its dependence on US support for its economic and military security. According to Pote, Sarit was deeply worried by the shift in US policy that saw the Americans now taking the lead from the British and French in the attempt to put Souvanna in power and "avoid any kind of hostilities in Laos at any price." Sarit was still more troubled when he looked to the future. He foresaw that some day when Thailand was threatened or attacked, the British and French might try to get the US to act in a similar fashion, watering down its commitments to Thailand if fulfilling them would risk US military involvement. Pote concluded that, notwithstanding Sarit's deep personal distrust of Souvanna, the more the US explained its position to Sarit and assured him regarding Thai security, the better chance it would have for working out political details on Laos.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1010, 16 Jan 62.

17 Jan 62 During a return call on Harriman in Geneva, Souvanna stated that: 1) he had not yet been able to arrange a meeting with Boun Oum; 2) he was prepared to discuss matters with Phoumi, should Boun Oum leave Geneva, provided Phoumi had full powers; 3) he was ready to include demobilization of the armies, a problem whose great importance he recognized, in the Lao declaration of neutrality; 4) all matters referred to in the Zurich communique (see item 22 June 1961), but not dealt with in the Conference Protocol, would be mentioned in the Declaration of Neutrality; 5) he was much concerned about the recent remark by Khamphan Panya (see item 16 January 1962) implying that the RLG might turn to Thailand (Harriman stated that success in this was doubtful) if US aid should be cut off; 6) he recognized that Sarit feared a Communist Laos, as he did himself, but felt that the partition advocated by Sarit was no real solution, since Communist pressure would only be shifted to the new boundaries; and 7) Thailand should therefore support his policy of a

neutral Laos, and he in turn would give a "categoric assurance" that Laos would "cause no trouble of any kind" among the Lao-speaking tribesmen of northeastern Thailand.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1049, 17 Jan 62.

17 Jan 62 Concerned by an increasing concentration of Pathet Lao-Kong Le-Viet Minh forces in and round Mahaxay, only about 25 miles east of Thakhek (headquarters of Group Mobile 14), RLG military authorities set in motion a series of defensive sweeps by elements of GM 14 and GM 12 aimed at forestalling any PL move against Thakhek. A reconnaissance patrol of the 8th Infantry Battalion (GM-14) in an engagement with an enemy squad lost one man killed and one man wounded. In support of the operations, three T-6 aircraft conducted air strikes. MAAG representatives, investigating reports that Thailand had offered bombs and fuses to the FAR Air Force, reported the strong probability that bombs had been employed on at least one of the air missions.

(S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, 171618Z Jan 62, DA IN 193939; (S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, 181515Z Jan 62, DA IN 194573; (S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, 172143Z Jan 62, DA IN 193647; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1051, 27 Jan 62.

17 Jan 62 Referring to missions flown by FAR T-6 aircraft in support of recent ground operations, the JCS reminded CINCPAC and CHMAAG Laos that under the policy established by the JCS in August 1961 T-6 aircraft should be used only against Kong Le-Pathet Lao forces which in violation of the cease-fire were conducting operations against FAR-Meo forces, and that reports of air missions must contain a specific statement whether or not the enemy forces were violating the cease-fire.

The JCS directed CHMAAG to find some way of curbing such air missions if they were not in accord with the policy.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC and CHMAAG Laos, JCS 2940, 172254Z Jan 62.

18 Jan 62 During a forthright session with Phoumi and Boun Oum at Geneva, Ambassador Brown informed them that the President wished a peaceful settlement in Laos; this could only be achieved through a coalition government (to include Phoumi and his followers) under Souvanna, with the Defense and Interior Ministries in neutralist hands. Brown countered Phoumi's continued objections by stating that "it would be very hard on the country," and on the RLG armed forces as well, if the United States was "unable to continue its support." Phoumi exploded angrily that Brown was threatening him and that "one should never threaten an Asian." Brown apparently succeeded in placating Phoumi, who stated that the "new" understanding he had just gained of the US position faced him with a "very difficult decision." Brown also appealed directly to Boun Oum, urging him "to consider his heavy responsibilities to his people and not to cast away the structure of international guarantees now available to his country nor to deny it US support."

Later in the day, Harriman informed Boun Oum and Phoumi of US disappointment that discussions among the three Princes had not yet begun, warned that the formation of a government was not a purely internal question, as Boun Oum claimed, but was vital in ending a civil war involving international elements, and urged that Phoumi continue discussions should Boun Oum have to return to Laso for family reasons. Harriman continued by stating that US aid "had been given to Laos and not to Phoumi or any other individual." Phoumi replied by agreeing to stay at Geneva beyond the meeting that afternoon with the Princes, should this be necessary, and hinted at some concession by stating that some positive results might be expected from their meeting. Harriman then addressed Phoumi directly and with emphasis, stating that "'you are a Lao for whom we have great respect. We hope that you, yourself, have a good future as well as your country.'" He was obviously relieved and gratified by this expression."

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1055, 18 Jan 62.

18 Jan 62

After two days of intensified pressure by the US, UK, and other delegations, Boun Oum and Phoumi met for the first time at Geneva with the other Princes and the Co-Chairmen; various advisers were also present. Previous attempts by Souvanna to arrange such a meeting had been blocked by Boun Oum's insistence that Souvanna come to him "'if he has anything to say.'"

During the session, Souphaouvong and Souvanna readily accepted the draft Protocol to the Declaration of the Neutrality of Laos, but Phoumi reversed the conciliatory impression he had just given Harriman (see previous item) by objecting to Article 5, which dealt with the French presence in Laos, asserting that this was a purely domestic affair to be handled later in the Laotian Neutrality Declaration; he also expressed reservations (unspecified) over Article 9, which commissioned the ICC to "supervise and control" the cease-fire.

The Co-Chairmen then withdrew to enable talks to begin on Laotian internal matters, but Phoumi scotched these by insisting that such discussion could only take place in Laos. (Souvanna and Souphanouvong had categorically rejected this idea at a private luncheon earlier in the day, saying that the Geneva meeting was the last opportunity to discuss a coalition government.) The meeting then adjourned.

During the reception that followed, the leading delegations present expressed acute disappointment regarding the meeting. Pushkin spoke to Sullivan and Harriman in most excitable terms, fervently denouncing Phoumi's actions and predicting they would result in a renewal of fighting in Laos. He charged further that RLG forces were violating the cease-fire and that Chinese Nationalist troops also were involved. Harriman disputed these assertions, but Pushkin refused to be placated. Ambassador Brown reproached Phoumi and insisted that a further meeting of the Princes be scheduled for the following day; Phoumi reluctantly accepted.

(C) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1052, CONFE 1057, 18 Jan 62; (S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1058, 19 Jan 62.

18 Jan 62 Commenting from Geneva on the series of questions recently posed from Bangkok by Ambassador Young (see items 9, 15 January 1962), Assistant Secretary Harriman briefly reviewed the US position. To avoid either abandoning Laos to Communism or having to introduce American troops with or without the participation of SEATO allies, the United States had chosen the middle course of arranging a cease-fire followed by negotiations for a unified, neutral, and independent Laos. Over the months a better basic agreement had been worked out at Geneva than some had thought possible. Its most encouraging feature was the undertaking of the Soviet Union to police the Communist Bloc's observance of the agreement (when finally in force), including the provision that Lao territory would not be used as a corridor for activities against other countries, such as South Viet Nam. "We believe it is risk worth taking to hold Soviets responsible for closing this corridor. Khrushchev's personal good faith is attached to it."

Harriman observed that Sarit's opinion that Souvanna was "irretrievably sold out" to the Communists was not supported by evidence and that the United States and most other nations represented at Geneva were convinced that Souvanna did not wish to see Laos go to the Communists. Harriman declared that the United States had the right to expect Sarit, as an ally, "to cooperate with and not sabotage our policy." He noted that there was considerable evidence that word from Sarit had contributed to Phoumi's intransigence in demanding control of both the Defense and Interior Ministries, and that Phoumi's current stand was a refusal to negotiate at all. This raised a fundamental question of whether Phoumi could be allowed to dictate the military and political policies of the United States. "It is unthinkable," Harriman wrote, that "we should be led to a military action in Laos by Phoumi. This is the basic issue."

Harriman said that no detailed answer could be given at present to Sarit's question about US planning to retrieve the situation in Laos if the Souvanna government showed signs of succumbing to the Communists. The United States would of course continue to watch the situation closely, would attempt to strengthen the Souvanna government with political and economic assistance, and would try to deal with any unfavorable development. A key test would be the elections scheduled to be held after demobilization of the armed factions. Souvanna believed that the Pathet Lao could be defeated in the elections if the non-Communist groups could be brought to agree on a single candidate per district. Harriman observed that the future depended to a considerable extent on whether Laotians were willing to subordinate their personal political ambitions to preservation of their country's independence. The cooperation of the Thai Government in bringing about a favorable outcome would be "of real importance."

Harriman instructed Ambassador Young not to open discussion in Bangkok of the possible alternative solution described by Ambassador Brown on 9 January (see item),

involving a government under Souvanna at Luang Prabang with further administrative centers at Vientiane and Khang Khay. Exploration of this possibility was to be confined for the present to Geneva (see item 14-18 January 1962).

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState for action Bangkok, CONFE 1056, 18 Jan 62.

- 19 Jan 62 During a call on Phoumi at Geneva, Ambassador Brown continued to insist on the absolute necessity of the Princes reaching a detailed agreement at Geneva, while Phoumi spoke only in terms of an agreement on major problems and the development of a procedure for completing details in Laos itself, on the ground that "he had many people to consult" there. Brown bluntly contradicted this, asserting that whatever Phoumi and Boun Oum agreed to would be approved by their colleagues. Phoumi said that he would stay on in Geneva "for a few days" after Boun Oum's departure the following day.

Phoumi stated his intention of proposing that the question of the disposition of the Defense and Interior portfolios be postponed until he had seen how the other posts were allotted, a matter about which he intended to present several formulae to Souvanna at their meeting that afternoon. He indicated a certain softening in his position by stating, in reply to Brown's question, that negotiations were "not excluded" on the possibility of the Defense and Interior posts going to the neutralists. Brown expressed his pleasure at this remark, saying that disposition of the subsidiary posts in these Ministries were negotiable questions.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1065, 19 Jan 62.

- 19 Jan 62 The three Princes met in Geneva and then signed a "Joint Communique . . . on the Formation of a Government of National Unity in Laos," which was forwarded to the Co-Chairmen as a confidential document. It was not to be made public until Boun Oum had submitted his final position on the distribution of portfolios in the prospective government, following consultation with his colleagues in Vientiane. After commending the efforts of the Co-Chairmen and delegations at the Geneva Conference and unanimously approving "the good results achieved by the Conference," the Joint Communique continued as follows:

The three Princes consider it most necessary and urgent to form a Government of National Unity in Laos and to send a united delegation to the Geneva Conference to take part in its final stage and to sign the documents adopted at the Conference.

After a very friendly exchange of opinions on the formation of a Government of National Unity of Laos, the three Princes agreed on the following:-

1. The Government of National Unity of Laos will be formed on the basis of the joint communiques of Zurich and Hin Heup signed by the three Princes on June 22, 1961, and October 8, 1961, respectively.

2. The Government of National Unity of Laos will be composed of eighteen (18) members including one Prime Minister, two deputy Prime Ministers, nine ministers and six vice-ministers, divided between the three parties in the following way:
 - (a) For the party of Prince Souvanna Phouma
 - one Prime Minister with portfolio
 - seven ministers
 - two vice-ministers, making ten members in all.
 - (b) For the party of Prince Souphanouvong
 - one deputy-Prime Minister with portfolio
 - one minister
 - two vice-ministers, making four members in all.
 - (c) For the party of Prince Boun Oum:
 - one deputy Prime Minister with portfolio
 - one minister
 - two vice-ministers, making four members in all.
3. As for the distribution of portfolios, the parties of Prince Souvanna Phouma and of Prince Souphanouvong feel that it is reasonable that the three key portfolios (National Defense, Interior and Foreign Affairs) should go to the party of Prince Souvanna Phouma. The party of Prince Boun Oum feels that the portfolios of Defense and Interior should go to itself, and if that party did not obtain these two portfolios, it would choose two of the following portfolios:-
 - Foreign Affairs
 - Finance
 - Information and Press.

The party of Prince Souphanouvong considers that it should have the portfolios of Economy and Information.

In the view of these differences of opinion, it was decided to await a final reply from the party of Prince Boun Oum, which could not be expected until Prince Boun Oum had returned to Vientiane.

4. The party of Prince Souphanouvong considers that among the ten members of the party of Prince Souvanna Phouma the proportion should be seven from Xieng Khouang and three from outside Xieng Khouang; whereas the party of Prince Boun Oum considers that this proportion should be six to four. It was decided that Prince Souvanna Phouma would compose this difference as best he could.

5. The final distribution of portfolios will be made by Prince Souvanna Phouma, it was mutually agreed.

6. The list of candidates for membership of the Government from each party will be presented to Prince Souvanna Phouma by the leader of each party.

(C) Msgs, SecState to Geneva, FECON 732, 22 Jan 62; Geneva to SecState, CONF A-25, 24 Jan 62.

19 Jan 62

Referring to the JCS admonition against offensive air operations (see item 17 January 1962) and to instructions from CINCPAC to impress upon RLG authorities the importance of not violating the cease-fire, CHMAAG Laos reported to CINCPAC that on numerous occasions he had personally presented the US policy to General Phoumi. The RLG, in the opinion of CHMAAG, had "done rather well in walking the narrow path between improving their position throughout the country and not laying themselves open to charges of cease-fire violations." In absence of a specific cease-fire agreement, he reported, violations were a matter of opinion and not readily identifiable except for attacks on population centers clearly held by either side at the beginning of the cease-fire. "Low key" combat operations had continuously seethed back and forth over most of the country since May 1961, he continued. The FAR aircraft strikes had been directed against enemy concentrations in non-urban areas, enemy attacks, and enemy counter-action to FAR sweeps. Taking the foregoing into account, he believed General Phoumi had not been "wholly unresponsive" except for the possible use of bombs reported in the Mahaxay operations. In this connection, he thought the only "positive hold" would be to deny the FAR all T-6 armament or otherwise withdraw vital support for these aircraft, measures that he did not recommend at this time.

CHMAAG further reported, after a discussion with the Acting Minister of Security, General Bounleut, that he had received assurances that the RLG recognized the importance the US attached to the subject. He was "relatively confident" that Thailand had provided the RLG with bombs and in his discussion with General Bounleut he stressed the adverse effect of employing bombs at this time. CHMAAG informed CINCPAC that he would be in Bangkok the next day, to discuss with the US Ambassador and military representatives measures for cutting off the supply of bombs from Thailand.

(TS) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 194054, 18 Jan 62; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 182211Z Jan 62; (TS) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 194258, 19 Jan 62.

19 Jan 62

Ambassador Brown reported from Geneva that he had protested to General Phoumi against the use of bombs by T-6 aircraft. Confirming that the bombs had been obtained from Thailand, General Phoumi agreed to instruct Acting Minister of Security Bounleut to stop the use of bombs. Ambassador Brown, on his part, instructed CHMAAG Laos to make a strong protest to Bounleut and, if the FAR Air Force did not immediately cease to employ bombs, to make every effort to ground the planes by withholding all technical support, servicing, spare parts, training advice, etc.

(TS) Msg, Geneva to SecState for action Vientiane, 714, 19 Jan 62.

19 Jan 62 The RLG announced a reorganization of the Ministry of National Security (MNS) and of the National Army Command (CAN-the FAR operational or field forces command). [See chart below].

According to CHMAAG Laos, whose letter describing the reorganization was received by the JCS on 6 March, the most significant elements of the reorganization were the following:

1. The National Army Command (CAN) was redesignated the National Security Forces Command (FSN). The FSN retained all former CAN functions and the same commander, General Bounleut. It would be under the direct control of the Minister of National Security, Phoumi, and it would relocate its headquarters from Luang Prabang to Vientiane as soon as possible.

2. A Directorate of Military Budget was created and placed directly under Phoumi. This move would "streamline" the FAR financial and comptroller functions by placing them in one organization for the first time.

3. Under Phoumi's Chief of Staff, General Ouan, the MNS staff had gained the following divisions:

a. General Affairs. The conduct of the cease-fire negotiations would be the principal activity of this division.

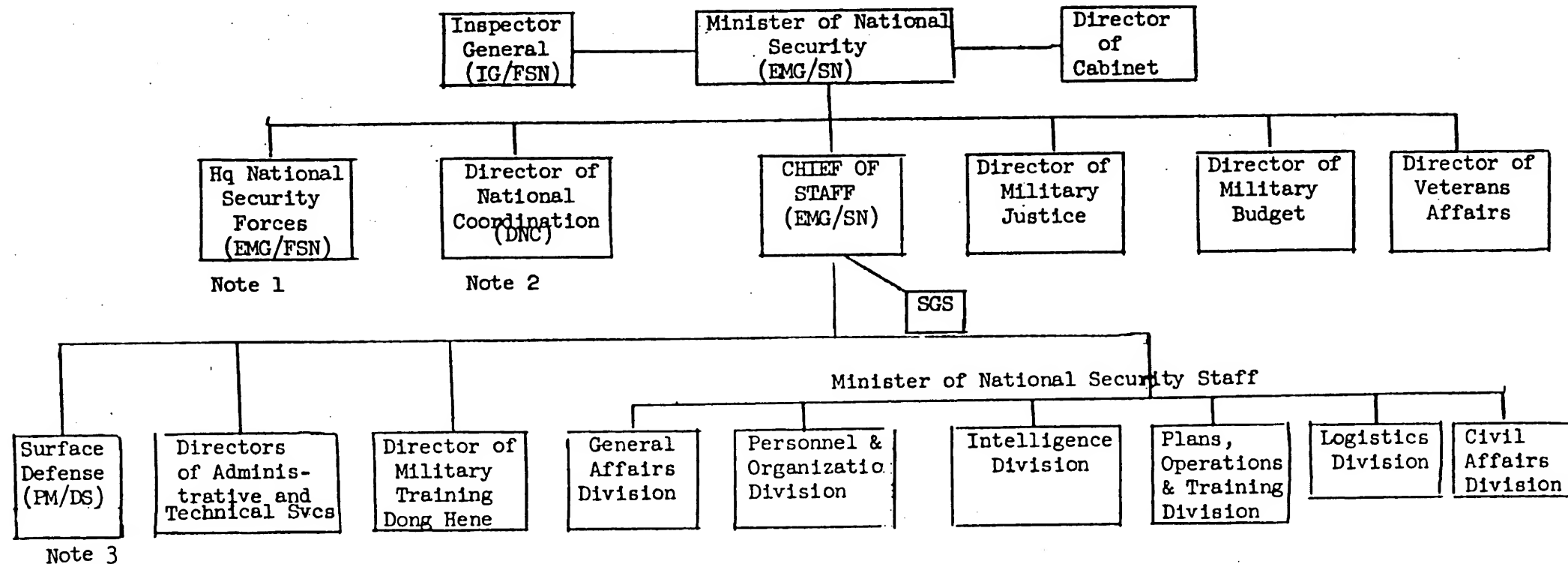
b. Intelligence. Formerly, intelligence collection and dissemination had been the responsibility of the Directorate of National Coordination (DNC), another agency within the MNS. The separation of the DNC staffs from FAR staffs at the national, regional, and operational levels had precluded timely intelligence actions. Now, with a G-2 in the MNS staff and a G-2 in the FSN staff, the RLG was establishing, for the first time, a "true military intelligence system."

c. Civil Affairs. Except for a DNC psychological warfare section that had not effectively coordinated with the FAR, there had formerly been no civil affairs, psychological warfare, or troop information activities in the MNS.

4. Attached to the MNS and under the Chief of Staff, but not part of the MNS staff, were: (1) the Surface Defense Command (DS), under General Bounpone, controlling the regional ADC and volunteer units; (2) the Directorates of Administrative and Technical Services; and (3) the Directorate of Military Training. Regarding the first two of the above elements, CHMAAG commented that, in the unlikely event that Phoumi actually gave General Ouan freedom to operate them, Phoumi would be freed of much of the administrative detail that currently occupied his attention.

The creation of the Directorate of Military Training could be the "most significant development in the entire reorganization," CHMAAG reported. General Oudone would

MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY
REORGANIZATION OF 19 JANUARY 1962



- Note 1 - National Security Forces (Infantry Bns, GM Hqs, and Combat Arms: Arty, Armored, River Flotilla, Air Force) Service Troops & PsyWar Bn elements assigned to FSN by MNS according to operational needs and missions.
- Note 2 - DNC Hq & Security Forces Vientiane, Regional DNC Commands.
- Note 3 - Regional Forces (Volunteer Battalions and ADCs).

command this directorate, thereby controlling the entire FAR training effort.

5. The reorganization eliminated both the clandestine Army Command (see item 2 September 1961) and a "Combined Staff" originally formed to coordinate planning with the US, South Viet Nam, and Thailand.

6. The reorganization did not create a Logistics Command or otherwise strengthen and centralize FAR logistics, despite CINCPAC's advice to Phoumi that this be done (see item 1 July 1961).

CHMAAG reported that the Ministry of National Security had requested MAAG assistance in establishing missions and functions for several offices involved in the reorganization. The MAAG was performing the tasks, hoping thus to be able to help shape the entire structure of the MNS. At the same time, MAAG representatives would continue trying to convince Phoumi that the FAR logistical command system should be changed.

(See item 30 March 1962.)

(C) JCS 2344/37, 9 Mar 62; JMF 9155.2/9101 (6 Mar 62).

19 Jan 62

Ambassador Young reported to the Secretary of State that Souvanna's offer to give Thailand "categorical assurances" of his intentions in the Lao-Thai border area (see item 17 January 1962) was interesting and encouraging if some way could be found for Souvanna to convey these views to Sarit in a convincing manner. Foreign Minister Thanat had suggested that Souvanna make a public statement regarding his purpose in winning the election and preventing a Communist take-over of Laos (see item 15 January 1962), but Ambassador Young had replied that such a public declaration was impractical during the negotiating period. Young, however, wondered if some sort of assurance via an appropriate private non-American channel might help convince the Thai. In view of the "massive distrust" between Sarit and Souvanna, the US would have to consider carefully what would constitute the best channel, if indeed the suggestion was at all feasible.

Ambassador Young also observed that the news of a Chinese Communist agreement to build a road from the Yunnan border to Phong Saly (see item 15 January 1962) would heighten the general Thai suspicion of Souvanna and strengthen their belief that the Communists were already effectively partitioning Laos by military, economic, and diplomatic actions. While Thailand favored an indefinite continuation of the present de facto division of Laos, they would officially shrink from suggesting or sanctioning a formal Lao partition. What the Thai really desired was a "genuine neutral buffer" beyond their Mekong border.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1042, 19 Jan 62.

20 Jan 62

Ambassador Brown called on Phoumi and Boun Oum at Geneva to hear their account of the signing of the Joint Communiqué by the three Princes the previous day (see item 19 January 1962). He was told that Boun Oum had said he would consider conceding Defense and Interior to the center faction if he

could have a choice of two from among the Foreign Affairs, Finance, and Information Ministries. Souphanouvong claimed Information and Economy, and Souvanna wanted Foreign Affairs assigned to the center. When Brown asked Phoumi if he now accepted the proposition that Defense and Interior could not be held by either the right or left wing, Phoumi replied that he still had reservations about allotting the two posts to Souvanna but would not oppose it if his Vientiane colleagues, after hearing his explanation of the "international aspects of the problem," were prepared to yield. He countered Brown's remark that any advice given by Phoumi and Boun Oum would certainly be accepted by saying only that "he would see what he could do."

Concerning further meetings of the Princes and thus the implementation of the communique, Phoumi said that Souvanna had the prerogative of fixing a date (as yet unspecified) for such a meeting at Luang Prabang.

Harriman then joined the conversation. He urged Phoumi to convince Sarit during his passage through Bangkok on the return journey of the US interest in protecting both Thai and Lao interests. He also stated explicitly that the projected Lao government would receive US economic and financial aid and full support in defeating the Communists in the subsequent elections.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1072, 20 Jan 62.

20 Jan 62 Harriman evaluated the accord just reached by the Princes at Geneva (see item 19 January 1962) as representing "positive progress" and a "realistic framework" for a Laotian settlement. Pointing out that the major question of the disposition of the Defense and Interior posts remained unsettled, he reported that Boun Oum and Phoumi had informed the US delegation that the Princes had agreed to accept the King's decision on this issue. Harriman stated that US policy should be to see to it that this proviso was a face-saving device for an RLG surrender rather than a new obstacle to a settlement. He also asserted that the other important offices must go to Vientiane neutrals, who should be of high quality. Mentioning that Ambassador Brown was returning to Vientiane on 21 January, he emphasized the importance of Sarit's being prevented "from exercising a negative influence on Phoumi."

Harriman restated this warning in a message in which he instructed Ambassador Young in Bangkok to see Sarit at once to assure that the advice given Phoumi during the latter's stopover in Bangkok would be "constructive." Harriman was particularly concerned that Sarit should not encourage Phoumi's intransigence on the Defense and Interior question, and stated decisively that the "US has every reason to expect Sarit's cooperation."

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState for action Bangkok, CONF 1067, 20 Jan 62; (C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1066, 20 Jan 62.

20 Jan 62 In order to provide British Foreign Secretary Lord Home with the latest US thought on the application of sanctions to impel the RLG toward agreement on a coalition government, MacDonald met with Harriman and Ambassador Brown at Geneva. MacDonald reiterated the British position that the pressure

of sanctions should be applied at once, to have its effect on the negotiations among the Lao factions currently in progress; sanctions should consist of halting the US airlift and delivery of POL supplies and the withdrawal of certain MAAG personnel, especially from FAR headquarters. Harriman in turn restated the US policy that sanctions should not be used unless and until Boun Oum and Phoumi caused a rupture of the negotiations, and then not until Souvanna had proposed a satisfactory cabinet and Pushkin had agreed to restrain the Pathet Lao (see item 7 January 1962). MacDonald agreed to try to influence Pushkin on the latter point.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1068, 20 Jan 62.

20 Jan 62 In a conversation at Geneva with Harriman and Brown, Souvanna stated that he was encouraged by the Joint Communiqué (see item 19 January 1962). He said that Phoumi had made an important concession in considering the possibility of neutralist Defense and Interior Ministers, provided the RLG faction secured two from among the Foreign Affairs, Finance, and Information portfolios. Souvanna agreed that Phoumi's reserve regarding a final decision was justifiable if he was really sincere about consulting his followers in Laos.

Souphanouvong had asked for the Information Ministry. This prompted Souvanna to believe it should go to the center and that Quinim should continue in it. Harriman agreed regarding disposition of the post, and then emphasized that those cabinet posts of importance in influencing the election should not fall to Souphanouvong's MLHX. Souvanna assured Harriman that "this would cause no difficulty." He asked in turn that the US and other Ambassadors in Laos pressure Phoumi to yield quickly concerning the Interior and Defense posts.

Harriman replied by urging Souvanna to try to strike a balance between the conflicting proposals advanced by Souphanouvong and Boun Oum concerning the number of Vientiane neutrals in the projected cabinet (see item 19 January 1962). An equitable solution to this problem, Harriman continued, would aid the US Government in mobilizing "US public support" for Souvanna's government.

Souvanna said "he had heard" that US officers were coming to Muong Sai to rally FAR forces, and asked Brown to prevent any FAR attacks. Harriman and Brown joined to assure Souvanna that the MAAG had strict orders to prevent any offensive.

Souvanna concluded by stating that he would return to Laos about 27-28 January and would then consult with the RLG to arrange a date for a meeting of the Princes.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1073, 21 Jan 62.

20 Jan 62 CHMAAG Laos reported that the FAR 8th Infantry Battalion, engaged in the sweep towards Mahaxay, had been counterattacked during the morning of 18 January by elements of one North Vietnamese battalion with two 105-mm howitzers and three armored cars and had been dispersed. As in the case at Muong Sai, the FAR troops made what appeared

to be only a token resistance and then withdrew. The enemy, seemingly content to blunt the FAR operation, made no attempt to follow.

(S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, JCS, et al., DA IN 195000, 20 Jan 62; (S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 196366, 25 Jan 62.

20 Jan 62 Ambassador Young advised the Secretary of State that in his judgment, Ambassador Brown's tri-cornered plan for Laos (see item 9 January 1962) was worth serious consideration, particularly since Thailand would consider it an attractive alternative to the present US policy. The Ambassador realized that the plan would be seriously considered only if the present policy of achieving a coalition government had to be abandoned. Should that occur, the Ambassador requested permission to inform Sarit of the plan before it was bruited about. To help ameliorate the present strained relations between the US and Thailand over Laos, such prior consultation would help make Sarit believe that the US wanted his aid (as in fact it did) in solving the Lao problem. This could lead to a Thai commitment to a course of action in Laos that the US supported, the Ambassador noted, in contrast to the present Thai position of remaining critical of US policies without facing up to the actual available alternatives.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1046, 20 Jan 62.

20 Jan 62 The US, UK, French, and Canadian drafting group at Geneva (see item 10 January 1962) prepared an outline cease-fire proclamation which would be available for presentation to Souvanna when circumstances seemed auspicious. It stated:

OUTLINE OF PROCLAMATION

1. Note existence of de facto cease-fire.
2. To ensure continued existence of the cease-fire, proclamation would make arrangements concerning the following matters inter alia:
 - (A) Order all parties to refrain from taking any action which might lead to resumption of hostilities.
 - (B) Prohibition on troop reinforcements.
 - (C) Separation of troops.
 - (D) Regrouping of troops.
 - (E) Unification of the armed forces into a single national army.
 - (F) Demobilization of all forces in excess of the requirements of the single national army.
 - (G) Disposition of excess war material and elimination of mines and booby traps.
 - (H) Release of all political prisoners and detainees.

(I) Prohibition of reprisals and discrimination against persons or organizations for activities during hostilities.

3. The carrying out of cease fire arrangements.

(A) Establishment of appropriate machinery for carrying out the arrangements.

(B) Provision for the issuance of detailed implementing regulations to be incorporated in the arrangements.

(C) Understanding that the international commission for supervision and control would assist the RLG in carrying out the arrangements.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1091, 23 Jan 62.

21 Jan 62 MacDonald informed the US, French, and Canadian delegations at Geneva of renewed Soviet proposals for a plenary session, whose alleged purpose would be to hear a report by the Co-Chairmen on the results of their consultations with the Princes regarding the various Conference documents. Sullivan felt that a plenary would simply provide an opportunity for Chinese Communist propaganda and would also embarrass the French by revealing RLG criticism of their military presence in Laos (see item 18 January 1962). He therefore opposed the plenary proposal, although less vigorously than in the past (see item 12 January 1962), since the recent agreement between the Princes had lessened the danger of friction arising from propaganda speeches.

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1076, 22 Jan 62.

21 Jan 62 Ambassador Young met with Phoumi and Boun Oum--both in Bangkok on a short layover--and Prime Minister Sarit. During their lengthy discussion Phoumi argued vigorously, with Sarit's support and encouragement, against the Souvanna coalition and US policy in Laos. Phoumi explained that in his conversations with Souvanna at Geneva he had not offered to surrender the Defense and Interior posts but merely hoped to show his reasonableness by offering to consider other views. Moreover, he did not intend to surrender the posts. In this position he received Sarit's full support. They asked Ambassador Young if President Kennedy had sufficient information to understand the real situation in Laos and whether the present US policy was indeed the President's. The Ambassador replied, "in three languages," that it was. Phoumi described his dilemma as follows: either he must surrender Laos to the Communists by agreeing with the West, or lose all US support by refusing to surrender.

Sarit then proposed that the only resort left was for the King to form a government and head it himself. Sarit silenced Phoumi's objections to this plan and asked him to consider it for a few days. Before leaving the meeting, Phoumi again pleaded with Young to convey to the President his fears and views.

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Later, in a private conversation with Young, Sarit was vehement in stressing the danger of the Lao crisis to Thailand: "If the US is wrong in Laos, Thailand is finished. We cannot afford mistake or regret." Sarit also mentioned the mounting pressure in Thailand for closer ties with the Soviet bloc. So far Sarit had resisted these pressures.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1047, 21 Jan 62.

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Jan 62

While the 8th Infantry Battalion was being regrouped and reorganized after its rout near Mahaxay, a move in the direction of the area from which it had withdrawn was undertaken by the 9th Infantry Battalion and 11th Parachute Battalion. This was in conjunction with a sweep to the north of Mahaxay by the 24th Infantry Battalion of Group Mobile 12. In an encounter with an enemy unit near Ban Na Kay on 22 January the 24th Battalion lost 2 men killed and one wounded and was forced to withdraw. The other two battalions apparently stopped short of their objective without making contact with the enemy.

In northern Laos, the outlying defenses of Nam Tha, headquarters of Group Mobile 11, had for several days been under sporadic shellfire. On 21 January, enemy forces estimated at two companies each attacked two defensive positions of the 1st Infantry Battalion near Ban Na Mo, about 19 miles east of Nam Tha, and overran the defenses. In the following two days the battalion was dispersed. The 2nd Infantry Battalion, on a defensive sweep in the vicinity, was outflanked and likewise forced to withdraw into Nam Tha. The enemy forces advanced to within ten miles of the city and emplaced artillery on the high ground overlooking the Nam Tha airfield.

(S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 195613, 22 Jan 62; (S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 195967-S, 23 Jan 62; (S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 196572, 25 Jan 62; (S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 196305, 25 Jan 62.

22 Jan 62

A draft "Statement on the Neutrality of Laos by the Royal Laotian Government," produced by the US, UK, France, and Canadian drafting group (see item 10 January 1962), was reviewed by the delegations of the four Western powers at Geneva. Presentation of the draft Statement to Souvanna was postponed until circumstances appeared more propitious, since it was feared that Quinim might pass on the text to "unfriendly" delegations. A general outline of the Statement was therefore prepared for use by the French in their discussions with Souvanna in Paris.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1091, 23 Jan 62.

22 Jan 62

Before leaving the Geneva Conference for Paris (and thence to Laos), Souvanna gave a press conference at which he expressed guarded optimism about the progress toward ultimate agreement on a coalition government, said that

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he expected a unified Lao delegation to return to Geneva early in February, remarked that he expected the King to intervene if necessary to further a final agreement, and concluded by treating rather lightly the press reports of renewed Laotian fighting. Souvanna asserted that his forces could not be responsible for this outbreak, since he had explicitly prohibited all offensive operations on their part.

(U) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1085, 22 Jan 62.

22 Jan 62 Phoumi "stated flatly" to John Hasey, a US Embassy official, that the RLG had not changed its position on the allocation of the Defense and Interior posts in a coalition government as a result of the Geneva meetings. Phoumi claimed he had only been maneuvering to sound out Souvanna's true position when he had said at Geneva that if the RLG gave up Defense and Interior it would have to receive its choice of two of the following three posts: Foreign Affairs, Information, and Finance (see item 19 January 1962). Souvanna had immediately claimed Foreign Affairs for his group, and Souphanouvong had demanded Information. In a separate conversation, Boun Oum also had told Hasey that the RLG had not ceded Defense and Interior at Geneva.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1025, 22 Jan 62.

22 Jan 62 The Acting Secretary of State suggested to Ambassador Brown that he present to Phoumi the US view that his refusal to concede Defense and Interior to Souvanna, especially as expressed during the meeting with Sarit (see item 21 January 1962), was an "unbelievable and shocking exhibition of duplicity" in the light of the signed, unpublished Geneva communique (see item 19 January 1962). The State Department was searching for means of bringing Phoumi into line without substantially depleting right-wing strength and was thinking of making it known privately to the King and all responsible Lao officials that the United States could no longer work with Boun Oum and Phoumi or support them as individuals. It was hoped that this declaration, given credibility by such measures as direct US payment of RLG troops, by-passing Phoumi, would induce other Lao leaders to use their influence to bring about coalition government under Souvanna. (For Ambassador Brown's comments, see item 27 January 1962.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 639, 22 Jan 62.

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From Washington, Harriman instructed Ambassador Gavin in Paris to attempt to follow up on the indication given by Phoumi at Geneva that he was willing to consider conceding Defense and Interior to the center faction in return for control of two of three other key ministries (see items 19 and 20 January 1962). Harriman instructed Gavin to try to obtain an agreement from Souvanna that Ambassador Brown might inform Phoumi that the RLG could control Foreign Affairs and either Finance or another ministry equally as satisfactory. The allocation of these portfolios, however, would depend upon the acceptability of the individuals nominated. This proposed solution would then be discussed at Luang Prabang by representatives of the three factions.

Mr. Harriman, for Ambassador Gavin's information, explained that Phoumi had complained that Souvanna refused to give him any assurances regarding the posts of Finance, Foreign Affairs, and Information. Souvanna, because both Phoumi and Souphanouvong were seeking the Information portfolio, had decided that this post should be reserved for the neutral group or made an adjunct of the Prime Minister's office. On the other hand, Souvanna did not consider Foreign Affairs to be a vital post. The third portfolio, Finance, was considered important by Mr. Harriman, who urged that the RLG, if given the post, either select an able Minister or a particularly effective Secretary of State for Finance. Gavin was not to inform Souvanna of the interview in Bangkok (see item 21 January 1962) during which Phoumi had refused to surrender the posts of Interior and Defense and Sarit had told Ambassador Young that the only solution was a government headed by the King.

On 24 January, Gavin inquired of Souvanna concerning the possible control of Foreign Affairs and Finance by Phoumi's adherents. The Prince promptly reserved Foreign Affairs for the center group, justifying his decision on the grounds that both Souvanna and Souphanouvong had claimed this post as well as that of Information. When asked if Phoumi were aware of this plan, Souvanna "hedged," saying only that Phoumi knew that Souphanouvong wanted the post. In any event, the Prince continued, Foreign Affairs would be insignificant, since the Geneva Protocol would leave the kingdom scant initiative in the field of foreign relations. Phoumi should instead seek a post of domestic importance, such as Education, Youth, or Cults. As for Finance, Souvanna accepted Leum Rajasombath, who was not one of Phoumi's nominees.

Souvanna also spurned a suggestion that he show consideration for the difficult situation faced by Phoumi and Boun Oum. He accused the two men of seeking personal aggrandizement at the expense of the national interest and charged that Phoumi, after seizing control of the armed forces and the police, was now attempting to manipulate the veterans' groups in order to concentrate economic power in his hands. The vehemence of this outburst impressed American Embassy officers.

The Prince, although upset by reports of an FAR offensive in the Mahaxay area, did not deny RLG statements that three Viet Minh soldiers had been captured. The story, he said, might well be true, since he could not at this time control the Viet Minh.

Souvanna also "took several swipes at Thailand," claiming that the Thai Government was suppressing the nationalistic ambitions of the Lao minority in northeast Thailand and concealing the purpose of this campaign by branding the Lao involved as Communists. The Prince recalled the Thai blockade of 1960 and pointed out that this incident had "taught him the value of trade outlets in many directions."

An officer of the American Embassy inquired if the Chinese Communists, as reports indicated, would build a road to Phong Saly (see item 15 January 1962). Souvanna acknowledged that they would and also said that a Chinese Consul resided at Phong Saly. The Prince added, however, that his coalition would govern from Luang Prabang rather than from Phong Saly or Vientiane.

In answer to questions about the police and gendarmerie, Souvanna indicated that the police would be under the Minister of Interior, who would place them at the disposal of local authorities. The gendarmerie would be a military police organization within the Ministry of Defense.

Gavin also inquired about the Americans held prisoner in Laos. Souvanna, after noting that the Pathet Lao and not the forces of Kong Le had captured the Americans, expressed hope that Grant Wolfkill, a newsman, would soon be released. The remaining Americans, "military prisoners," would be released after the formation of his government.

The Prince stated that he intended to leave Paris on Saturday, 27 January. He would stay for one day in Rangoon and reach Laos on Tuesday. Thus, although Phoumi's group had made statements to the contrary, there could be no meeting between Boun Oum and Souvanna on Monday at Luang Prabang.

(S) Msgs, SecState to Paris, 3961, 22 Jan 62; Paris to SecState, 3585, 24 Jan 62.

23 Jan 62 The European edition of the NY Herald Tribune featured prominently a UPI dispatch from Vientiane, dated 22 January, that began, "The Royal Laotian Army said today it has thrown thousands of men into a battle near Mahaxay in an attempt to cut off a rebel supply line leading to Communist North Vietnam." The news account referred to the battle as an RLG "offensive." From Geneva, Sullivan expressed concern about the probable impact of this and other recent news reports of military action in Laos on the plenary session of the Conference scheduled for that afternoon.

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1087, 23 Jan 62.

23 Jan 62 A member of the RLG delegation at Geneva informed the US delegation in confidence that Boun Oum and Phoumi were determined not to relinquish the Defense and Interior Ministries to "non-Vientiane types." In an effort to win international support for this position, members of the RLG delegation were returning home by various routes that would allow them to consult with delegations at the United Nations, anti-Administration political circles in the United States, and the Japanese, South Korean, Chinese Nationalist, and Philippine Governments, as well as others (only the United Kingdom was specifically mentioned).

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1088, 23 Jan 62.

23 Jan 62 Co-Chairman MacDonald opened a plenary session of the Geneva Conference by reporting on the recent discussions and accords among the three Princes, stressing the positive accomplishments without glossing over the differences still existing. (Since the Joint Communiqué was still

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confidential, he did not set forth its terms in detail; see item 19 January 1962.) He appealed to the delegates for restraint in their public statements, in order to preserve a favorable atmosphere for further progress.

Soviet Co-Chairman Pushkin expressed general agreement with MacDonald but added an extended attack on Boun Oum and Phoumi, placing the blame for all delays and disagreements entirely on them. He concluded by intimating that the United States shared in the responsibility for the recent military operations in Laos through its support of the FAR. Quinim followed, pointing out that disposition of the key cabinet posts was still unresolved. He urged Boun Oum to act cooperatively, especially by halting military operations, and said that the diplomats in Vientiane, particularly Ambassador Brown, would now have to help in settling the Laotian question.

These relatively moderate speeches concluded, the delegates of the Souphanouvong party, North Viet Nam, and Communist China launched a succession of virulent attacks on the RLG and particularly the United States. They asserted that the agreement reached by the three Princes at Geneva was a "US-sponsored fraud" designed to delay a settlement so that the "US interventionists" could "test military formations recently created in SEATO countries." The Chinese Communist delegate described the reports of US pressure being applied to Boun Oum and Phoumi as a "deliberately concocted fairy tale"; rather than furthering a solution, the US was stalling one in the hope of gaining a superior military position and thereby attaining a pro-American coalition government. Among other things, the Chinese Communist delegate reaffirmed that SEATO protection of Laos must be abrogated, and he declared that the agreed Conference documents could not be changed to incorporate the "absurd" US proposals regarding control of the reintegration of Lao armed forces. Like the other Communist speakers, he charged that US-backed RLG forces were launching large-scale attacks in Laos.

After a more temperate speech by the Polish delegate, who merely intimated that US support was an element in the RLG intransigence, Sullivan replied to the attacks on US policy. He questioned the motives of anyone who called the agreement a fraud and urged those truly interested in solving the Laotian problem not to disparage or undercut the agreements already reached. Stating that the US delegation had no reliable information concerning the recent military operations in Laos, he said that the ICC should be called upon to investigate any suspected violations of the cease-fire. Sullivan then addressed the Chinese Communist delegate directly, suggesting that he should "tell his leaders when he went back to China that the US and the Soviet Union had no intention of fighting a war on CPR behalf in Laos."

This remark was rejected by Pushkin, who exercised his privilege as a Co-Chairman to interrupt the order of speakers to make a reply. He stated categorically that the USSR and Communist China shared an "absolutely identical" position on Laos and that any "speculative attempt" by US spokesmen to encourage differences between the two was

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destined to failure. In a private conversation later, Pushkin told Sullivan that public allusions by US officials to Soviet-Chinese Communist differences "only complicated matters" and urged him "as a friend" not to do it again.

After conciliatory speeches by the delegates of South Viet Nam and India, MacDonald proposed that it be left to the Co-Chairmen to decide on what date in early February the next plenary session should be held, bearing in mind that a united Lao delegation appointed by a coalition government was expected to attend. The Conference agreed.

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1090, 23 Jan 62;
(U) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1099, 25 Jan 62; (S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1101, 26 Jan 62.

23, 24
Jan 62

Ambassador Young delivered a personal letter from the President to the Thai Prime Minister in an effort to convince Sarit that he must urge Phoumi to accept the neutralist government concept for Laos. The President explained once again the necessity for supporting the Souvanna solution, and asked Sarit to counsel Phoumi "to move forward promptly and in good faith with the remaining steps for the formation of a government of national union." The President emphasized the importance of the assurance given by the Soviet Union at Geneva that it would accept responsibility for seeing that the terms of the agreement were respected by the Communist parties involved. Although the West must be cautious, the President continued, he was convinced that for reasons of its own which might in part be related to the situation within the Communist Bloc, the USSR was serious about the responsibilities it would undertake under a Geneva agreement. "If the agreement is not respected, we will be in a position to hold the Soviets responsible. I assure you we fully intend to do so."

After one more round of arguments during which the Thai-US views were exchanged, Sarit told the Ambassador: "Okay, I agree and I don't agree but let's go ahead and try if that is what your President wants to do." Sarit barely suppressed his anger and frustration in this meeting, Young reported, but now seemed resigned to acquiescing in the President's policies.

Later that day in a meeting with Young on the same subject, Foreign Minister Thanat agreed with most of the Kennedy letter but wished to make certain "elaborations." Among these Thanat mentioned: the Thai Government believed that the problem was not so much the USSR, but what the Chinese and Viet Minh would do in Laos to take over the country whatever the USSR might say. Moreover, it would be surrendering Laos to Communism to give Souvanna the Defense and Interior posts. Thailand would accept Souvanna as Prime Minister but would like to suggest that the Defense and Interior posts be given to other capable neutrals.

The next day, during yet another conversation with Ambassador Young, Sarit dictated the following radio message to Phoumi: "I am sympathetic with you because I know this may mean death for you but it looks like you will have to give in and hope for the best in the future."

While not the strongest possible endorsement of the US position nor correct encouragement to Phoumi, Ambassador Young commented, this message represented a considerable retreat for Sarit. (For later indications that this message was not actually dispatched, see items 25 and 28 January 1962.)

(C) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1043, 20 Jan 62; (S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1075, 1085, 23 Jan 62; 1066, 24 Jan 62.

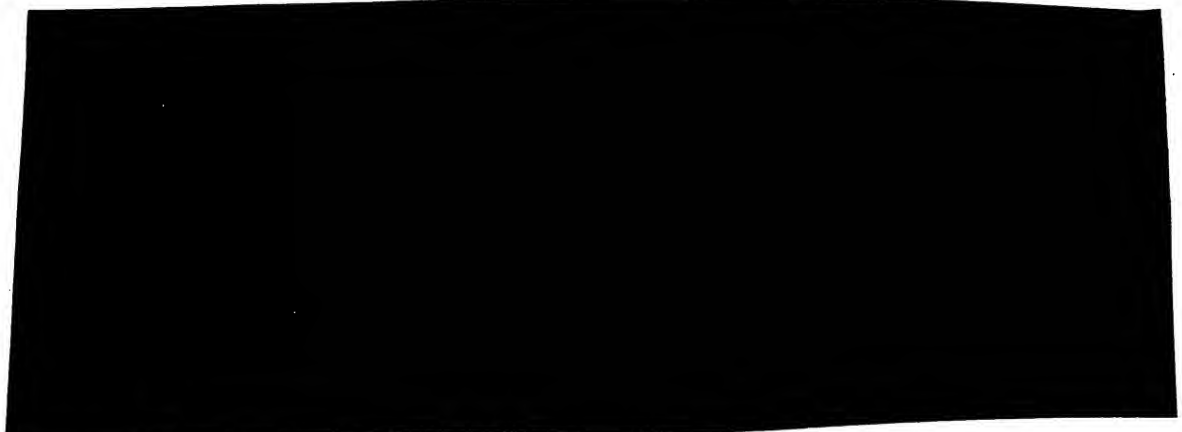
24 Jan 62 CINCPAC directed CHMAAG Laos to plan for the withdrawal of MAAG personnel and US equipment from Laos, using the assumption of a phase-out covering two to three months. CHMAAG should consult CHJUSMAG Thailand to insure the "orderly movement of people and things" into Thailand and to ascertain CHJUSMAG's capability to absorb MAAG Laos personnel and equipment, either permanently or temporarily. In the same message, CINCPAC reaffirmed the authorization for CHMAAG to plan the withdrawal of MAP materiel that would be excess to the needs of the FAR as reconstituted under a coalition government (see item 14 December 1961).

(On 30 January CHMAAG Laos informed CINCPAC that consultations held before receipt of the above directive had indicated that "CHJUSMAG Thailand not in position to absorb significant numbers of MAAG Laos personnel whereas CHMAAG SVietNam is.")

(For further withdrawal planning, see items 14 February and 2 and 12 March 1962.)

(S) Msgs, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 240420Z Jan 62; CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 197867, 30 Jan 62.

24 Jan 62



(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1066, 24 Jan 62.

24 Jan 62 CINCPAC reported to the JCS that recent Communist activities in Laos and Thailand had strengthened his earlier impression of probable Communist plans and programs in Southeast Asia (see item 23 December 1961). The Communists probably believed, CINCPAC said, that the US would force the RLG to accept a coalition government headed by Souvanna, and that they would be able eventually to dominate such a government.

CINOPAC also thought that the Communists had recently assigned a higher priority to Thailand and were attempting to subvert it simultaneously with Laos and South Viet Nam.

The Viet Minh had accelerated their subversive activities in northeast Thailand, CINCPAC said. Communist political and military cadres from Thailand were evidently receiving training and direct support from Pathet Lao centers in Laos. Furthermore, the Viet Minh now had an advance base in the Mahaxay-Nhommarath area, from which to move personnel and equipment into Thailand. In the event of a political settlement in Laos, additional large quantities of weapons, now used by the Pathet Lao, would be freed for use in Thailand.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 240411Z Jan 62.

25 Jan 62

Phoumi informed Hasey that he had consulted all his colleagues and they remained adamant that the Phoumi group should fill the portfolios of Defense and Interior in a government of national union. According to Phoumi, the King agreed with this position even if it meant the loss of US support. His Majesty was ready, however, to act as umpire in disputes among the three Princes with regard to these posts. The King, according to Phoumi, had refused to take the place of Boun Oum as Premier of a broader and more representative government unless the new government took into consideration the other two Princes. He was reportedly unwilling to deal with Souvanna and Souphanouvong as equals.

Phoumi, however, expressed the hope that a meeting of the three Princes would take place at Luang Prabang, but it could not be on 29 January, as forecast. Because of administrative problems, a meeting could not be held until a week or 10 days after Souvanna indicated he was returning to Laos.

During the conversation with Hasey, Phoumi asked with some feeling if the United States could not support him in claiming the Defense Ministry while assigning Interior to the Souvanna faction. "If I could only express my views to President Kennedy," he said. If convinced that the President and Secretary Rusk understood his position, he would listen to their views and guarantee to reach a compromise settlement.

The information available to Ambassador Brown on 25 January strongly indicated that no messages from Sarit had been received by Phoumi since the meeting of the two in Bangkok on 21 January (see item).

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1041, 25 Jan 62; 1042, 26 Jan 62.

25 Jan 62

Ambassador Brown recommended to the Secretary of State that the February cash grant aid for Laotian civil and military budget support be deposited within the next few days. Withholding the cash grant, said Brown, would lead to inflation, increased corruption and profiteering, and to a disruption of the RLG fiscal structure that might cause grave difficulties for a Souvanna government when ultimately established. At the same time, withholding the grant would not induce Phoumi to accept US proposals for a neutral government in the near future; the RLG's suspension of convertability and preparations to improve exchange controls indicated a determination to hold out for a long period.

To make the deposit, however, would probably encourage Phoumi in the belief that he had "put something over" on the US at Geneva and could be interpreted by the Soviets and by powers friendly to the US as a lack of determination to support Souvanna. These impressions could readily be dispelled by withholding military deliveries, but Brown understood the US policy to be not to take this step until Phoumi's intention to sabotage the negotiations for a neutral government became unmistakable and the US obtained assurances from the Soviets that they would restrain the Communist forces in Laos. On balance the Ambassador recommended making the February payment, with appropriate explanations to US allies. (See item 26 January 1962.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1037, 25 Jan 62.

25 Jan 62 Ambassador Ronning, head of the Canadian delegation at Geneva, passed on to the US delegation the gist of a conversation with Souphanouvong, with the latter's tacit understanding. Souphanouvong had expressed concern about the military situation in Laos, citing the reports of fighting near Mahaxay (see item 23 January 1962) and a purported build-up by RLG forces in the Tha Thom-Paksane region and near Muong Sai as well. Despite Ronning's arguments to the contrary, Souphanouvong apparently continued to believe that MAAG officers were deeply involved in these operations. He implied that, in the two months remaining until the rainy season began, Phoumi might well begin major offensive operations. Souphanouvong was to leave Geneva on 26 January 1962 for Laos.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1098, 25 Jan 62.

25 Jan 62 [REDACTED] CHMAAG Laos reported to CINCPAC, the Department of Defense, and the JCS that the recruiting and organizing of Kha resistance forces were progressing so well that authorization was required to support more than the 300 Kha presently being armed (see item 11, 13 January 1962). The US officials estimated that six ADCs could be formed in the Bolovens Plateau, and that several additional units could be formed farther to the north and east. They therefore requested that approval be given to the arming of 900 additional Kha in the same manner as the first 300. A Kha force of 1,200 could have a "significant impact" upon Viet Cong lines of communication in eastern Laos (whereas, CHMAAG [REDACTED] had reported three days earlier, the Kha presently under arms would form only a base from which a successful interdiction operation might be launched).

(On 31 January, [REDACTED] CHMAAG repeated the above recommendation, stating that 400 Kha had now been equipped and were in training. On 6 February, CINCPAC put his endorsement upon the proposed expansion to 1,200 armed Kha.) (See items 2 and 6 March 1962.)

(S)

[REDACTED]
CINCPAC to JCS, 060303Z Feb 62.

25 Jan 62 CHMAAG Laos informed CINCPAC that the failure of recent FAR operations in the Nam Beng valley, in the Mahaxay area, and in the neighborhood of Nam Tha warranted a new look at the military situation. In the past three months, CHMAAG

reported, there had been a marked build-up of Viet Minh forces in Laos. Despite his knowledge of the enemy build-up and in the face of warnings by his American advisors, General Phoumi had ordered the FAR to exert pressure on the enemy near Muong Sai, Tha Thom and Mahaxay, which had triggered sharp enemy reaction and resulted in complete rout of the FAR forces involved. CHMAAG stated that he was less disturbed by the failure of the FAR, which in view of the Viet Minh reinforcement was predictable, than by the fact that FAR commanders and troops had been ready to break and run at the first indication of Viet Minh presence. He believed the following conclusions could be drawn: 1) that the enemy, having little confidence in Pathet Lao-Kong Le troops, had been augmenting its forces with regular Viet Minh units and using them in combat when necessary; 2) that the Lao, both officers and men, had "an almost pathological fear" of Viet Minh forces, which, if it were to be overcome at all, could only be surmounted by developing FAR capabilities and confidence over a period of years; 3) that in spite of improvements, the FAR regular forces continued to have serious weaknesses especially in leadership and motivation. (See item 27 January 1962.)

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 196366, 25 Jan 62.

26 Jan 62 The Acting Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that, in view of Phoumi's apparent intention to postpone the Luang Prabang meeting and his unwillingness to agree that Souvanna should control the Defense and Interior Ministries in a coalition government (see item 25 January 1962), deposit of the February cash grant should be deferred.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 662, 26 Jan 62.

26 Jan 62 Ambassador Brown forwarded to the State Department a "limited country team estimate" of Viet Minh strength in Laos, prepared at his request by MAAG, ARMA, [REDACTED]. According to this estimate, an equivalent of at least 12 North Vietnamese infantry battalions, of about 450 men each, were serving in Laos. In addition to these combat units, totalling about 5,400 men, there were 3,000 to 4,500 North Vietnamese in service units and cadres, or acting as technicians and advisors for Kong Le and Pathet Lao units. The higher figure, according to the estimate, was probably the more accurate. Total Viet Minh strength in Laos ranged, therefore, from 8,800 to 10,000 men, with the probability favoring the upper limit. In connection with the estimate, it was reported that a Viet Minh prisoner had stated that his battalion, prior to entering Laos from Dien Bien Phu in December, had been outfitted to resemble a Pathet Lao unit.

The Team estimate, Ambassador Brown commented, was in sharp contrast to denials by Souvanna and the Soviets that Viet Minh forces were present in Laos. The estimate, he concluded, should be considered along with the recent attack towards Nam Tha, in discussing the validity of Soviet assurances that they would police their side during the negotiations for a coalition government; it was also relevant in considering the risks of imposing military sanctions on Phoumi.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState 1047, 26 Jan 62.

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- 26 Jan 62 Ambassador Brown reported that newsmen just returned from Nam Tha were filing dispatches stating that enemy forces heavily outnumbering the FAR were attacking Nam Tha from three directions. The civil population was being evacuated. MAAG personnel on the spot confirmed the advance by a substantial enemy force, which appeared capable of capturing Nam Tha in a few days. At the least, the enemy could readily occupy a dominating position in the surrounding hills. MAAG officers stated that there had been no movement by the FAR that would have justified this attack.
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1043, 26 Jan 62.
- 26 Jan 62 CHMAAG Laos reported to CINCPAC and the JCS that the FAR troops in and around Nam Tha (Group Mobile 11) were in serious trouble and that the RLG planned to airlift the 30th Infantry Battalion, which had recently returned from six weeks of unit training in Thailand, from Pakse in southern Laos to Nam Tha beginning the following day. (The airlift of the 30th Infantry Battalion, together with three 75-mm pack howitzers from Camp Chinaimo, near Vientiane, was completed on 29 January.)
(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 196695, 26 Jan 62;
(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 197363, 27 Jan 62; DA IN 197393, 28 Jan 62; (S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to [CINCPAC and JCS], DA IN 197728-S, 29 Jan 62.
- 26 Jan 62 Ambassador Gavin informed the Secretary of State that the American Embassy had expressed to a member of Souvanna's staff the "serious apprehension" felt by the US regarding the fighting at Nam Tha. A French Foreign Office official had stated that Souvanna, upon first learning of the action, had appeared "surprised and definitely dissatisfied."
(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3626, 26 Jan 62.
- 26 Jan 62 The State Department gave its approval to the draft Statement on Laotian Neutrality and the outline cease-fire proclamation prepared at Geneva (see items 20 and 22 January 1962). The Department stated that it considered the treatment in the cease-fire proclamation of the key questions of reprisals and private armies to be quite adequate. The Department assumed that inclusion of these questions in the draft indicated Souvanna's willingness to deal with them in a neutrality statement, and felt that their importance should be underscored through inclusion in the proclamation on cease-fire arrangements as well.
(S) Msg, SecState to Geneva, FECON 743, 26 Jan 62.
- 27 Jan 62 Ambassador Brown, commenting on Souvanna's recent remarks concerning the Lao police force and gendarmerie (see item 22, 24 January 1962), informed the Secretary of State that the Prince's plan to assign the civilian police to the Ministry of Interior and the gendarmerie to the Ministry of Defense coincided with the opinions of Ryan and Deuve, the American and French police advisors who were conferring in Vientiane (see items 27 November and 14 December 1961). These two advisors had agreed that the gendarmerie should not be placed in the Ministry of Interior along with the police but should be constituted as a separate force, military in character, and with no power over civilians except under conditions of martial law.
(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1012, 17 Jan 62; 1050, 27 Jan 62.

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27 Jan 62

Commenting on the State Department message of 22 January (see item) that had spoken of Phoumi's refusal to give up Defense and Interior as deceitful in the light of the Geneva communique (see item 19 January 1962), Ambassador Brown said he did not believe the communique constituted a firm commitment by the RLG to yield Defense and Interior. Boun Oum's signature merely committed the RLG leaders to consult and reach a decision on whether they adhered to their original demand for the two portfolios or would choose from other specified cabinet posts.

Brown said he had made the US dissatisfaction with Phoumi's intransigence known to nine important Lao officials "without apparent result in changing their support of Phoumi's position." "We must not delude ourselves into thinking there exist here strong anti-Communist leaders who are willing or able to materially influence Phoumi's actions." As for the suggestion that the US might show its disfavor of Phoumi by by-passing him in order to pay the RLG troops directly, Brown was sure that Phoumi would never allow this, "particularly since he has for time being ample financial resources . . . even if we suspend financial aid."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1052, 27 Jan 62.

27 Jan 62

CINCPAC, referring to the concern expressed by CHMAAG Laos about recent FAR operations (see item 25 January 1962), reappraised his 9 January estimate of the situation (see item). The introduction of "substantial" Viet Minh forces in the past two months, CINCPAC reported, altered the power balance in favor of the enemy and to a large extent negated the improvement in FAR capabilities. CINCPAC considered the minimum Viet Minh strength to be 7,400 (5,000 combat and 2,400 advisors), with a maximum of 10,000 as a not unreasonable estimate. The Viet Minh forces in Laos, CINCPAC continued, could move rapidly and effectively to reinforce, or to take over from, Kong Le-Pathet Lao forces at most of the major fronts.

Along with the mounting scale of North Vietnamese intervention, CINCPAC called attention to a statement by a Soviet Embassy official in Vientiane denying that any Viet Minh were in Laos. In view of this patent falsehood, CINCPAC concluded, the US should carefully consider how much faith could be placed in the peaceful intentions professed by Soviet representatives in Geneva.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 270348Z Jan 62.

27 Jan 62

Disturbed by CHMAAG's critical report of FAR operations (see item 25 January 1962), the State Department had queried Ambassador Brown about the reinforcement of Nam Tha reported on 26 January (see item). The State Department reminded the Ambassador that he had explicit instructions to restrain the RLG from provocative acts, even to the extent of withdrawing American aid if necessary for this purpose. The Ambassador was told that the State Department had not been previously informed that some of the FAR operations could be considered dangerously provocative and had not been approved by MAAG.

In his reply of this date, Ambassador Brown assured the State Department that the reinforcement of Nam Tha had his approval, in which CHMAAG concurred, as an action clearly necessary to protect the town against the enemy offensive, that General Phoumi had requested the ICC to intervene, and that there was hope of ICC action to calm down the situation. Referring to his own analysis of the military situation, despatched a few hours earlier, Ambassador Brown reiterated that the FAR operations had been essentially defensive in the face of a heavy enemy build up, except for a planned attack on Tha Thom and Ta Vieng in December 1961, which had been cancelled at his insistence (see item 14 December 1961); admittedly, the operations perhaps had not in all cases been soundly conceived from a military point of view.

As Ambassador Brown explained the situation, the enemy after the cease-fire agreement had concentrated large forces and introduced substantial North Vietnamese regular units in positions threatening key points held by the FAR. To be in a better position to react against any enemy attack, FAR units had been sent forward, but had withdrawn when attacked by the enemy. At Nam Tha, according to the Ambassador, the situation was simply an advance in force by the enemy against the town, which was defended by only a small garrison that had not been involved in any provocative act.

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 663, 26 Jan 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1051 and 1053, 27 Jan 62.

27 Jan 62 CINCPAC, reporting on the Nam Tha situation to the JCS, did not entirely agree with Ambassador Brown's analysis (see previous item). The enemy action, according to CINCPAC, appeared to be following the pattern of the recent operations near Muong Sai and Mahaxay, where FAR sweep operations in areas not clearly held by either side had been successful to the point where they placed pressure on positions considered critical by the enemy, at which point the enemy had in each case counterattacked and driven the FAR force from the threatened area, but had not followed up the advantage. As part of the FAR sweep towards Muong Sai, a move had been made from the direction of Nam Tha, and "in this sense," according to CINCPAC, "FAR forces were carrying the battle to the enemy." As soon as the FAR forces in the Nam Beng valley had been routed, the enemy had turned its attention to the column approaching from Nam Tha, had routed it also, and was now within attacking distance of the lightly defended town. Although CHMAAG had reported to CINCPAC on 25 January that the enemy appeared to be making an all-out offensive effort that could result in the early capture of Nam Tha, CINCPAC was inclined to think that the enemy would be content with blunting the FAR sweep. The enemy could undoubtedly seize the town, he reported, if they chose to.

(S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 196305, 25 Jan 62; (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 270233Z Jan 62.

27 Jan 62 In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the Joint Chiefs of Staff responded to a request of July 1961 (see items 28 July and 15 November 1961) by the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for a plan under which the

Department of Defense would assume responsibility for Meo paramilitary operations in Laos. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, agreeing with CINCPAC's recommendation, did not consider it appropriate for the Department of Defense to assume responsibility for Meo Auto Defense de Choc (ADC) paramilitary operations under current conditions. They recognized the need for a concept for this contingency, however, and had obtained CINCPAC's views before developing one. In submitting it the Joint Chiefs of Staff observed that "any actions taken in Laos must be considered in light of the over-all situation in Southeast Asia and must be in consonance with plans for the entire area which must include offensive actions, both overt and covert, in Laos and North Vietnam."

As the concept to be used if the Department of Defense was directed to assume responsibility for support of Meo operations the JCS recommended that: 1) CINCPAC organize a Joint Unconventional Warfare Task Force (JUWTF), or similar organization, to plan, coordinate, control, and support paramilitary operations in Laos by the Meo and, as appropriate, by FAR and third-country forces. 2) paramilitary forces and assets for Laos be employed in support of the JUWTF in accordance with established doctrine and policy. 3) Special programming and funding procedures be instituted to provide expeditious procurement and delivery of logistical support. In an appendix the JCS discussed in more detail the factors involved and the phasing necessary to accomplish the assumption of responsibility.

(TS) JCSM-61-62 for SecDef, "Contingency Planning for DOD Assumption of Responsibility for Support of Meo Operations (S)," 27 Jan 62, derived from (TS) JCS 2344/30, 18 Jan 62. JMF 9155.2/3100 (28 Jul 61).

27 Jan 62 According to a Vientiane radio broadcast, Boun Oum had sent Souvanna a telegram the previous day stating that he could not give a precise answer on the division of portfolios in a government of national union and expressing the hope that this question could be settled at the next meeting of the Princes at Luang Prabang.

Later in the day, Phoumi informed a US Embassy officer that he and Boun Oum would be glad to receive Souvanna at Luang Prabang on 2 February.

(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1054, 28 Jan 62; (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1056, 28 Jan 62.

27 Jan 62 Ambassador Young met with Prime Minister Sarit, Foreign Minister Thanat, and others to deliver the contents of two messages from the Acting Secretary of State. Young had been instructed to inform Sarit that the US considered he was entitled to the fullest possible assurances of US support for Thailand in case the formation of a neutral government under Souvanna resulted in an increased threat to Thai security. Therefore, if Sarit agreed to cooperate with the US in achieving a "Souvanna solution" in Laos, the Ambassador was authorized to tell Sarit (to be confirmed in writing if desired) that in event of Communist attack against Thailand, the US would give full effect to its obligations under Article IV (1) of the Manila Pact. The

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Thai Government should be reminded that commitment under this article was not conditioned on prior unanimous consent of all SEATO members and would be the fullest commitment the US could give Thailand.

Ambassador Young was also instructed to inform Sarit that the President was gratified at Sarit's promise to communicate with Phoumi, urging him to negotiate realistically, but the President was now astonished at reports from Vientiane that Phoumi was more intransigent than ever and was even contemplating postponement of the scheduled Luang Prabang meeting with Souvanna. Young was to tell Sarit of the President's confidence that "Sarit will follow through with Phoumi and see to it that Phoumi takes the desired action." Although he should not mention that the President was aware that a message opposite to the one promised had been sent to Phoumi, Ambassador Young could imply that the President could not believe that Phoumi would be so adamant if Sarit had really acted in good faith and sent the right message.

When the Ambassador presented these points, Sarit and Thanat expressed understanding for the President's concern and astonishment over Phoumi's intransigence, but they believed that the question of surrendering the major cabinet posts was "so much a matter of life or death for Phoumi" that they were not sure he would yield even to the best of arguments. Sarit urged the US to give Phoumi concrete assurances that he would receive support and assistance if, after the coalition government had been given a trial, it became clear that the Communists were taking over Laos. Sarit promised to attempt to persuade Phoumi in the light of such concrete assurances from the US. Ambassador Young was pessimistic concerning the amount of pressure Sarit would bring to bear on Phoumi or with what success Sarit's attempts would be crowned "unless the US could say something more on assurances."

(S) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, 1055, 23 Jan 62; 1084, 26 Jan 62; Bangkok to SecState, 1079, 27 Jan 62.

27 Jan 62 The Acting Secretary of State issued the following instructions to Ambassador Brown, to be carried out only if the discussions between Sarit and Phoumi (see previous item) failed to produce an agreement by Phoumi to "cooperate to our satisfaction." It had been concluded at the highest level of the US Government that, in that event, a showdown with Phoumi could no longer be deferred.

Ambassador Brown, at his scheduled meeting with Phoumi on 29 January, should first deliver to him a letter from President Kennedy that urged Phoumi to work with the United States in bringing about a peaceful settlement through the establishment of a government of national union, which the negotiations at Geneva had brought within reach. Phoumi, said the President's letter, had "a great responsibility for the future of Laos and . . . could contribute much now and in the future to the maintenance of Lao independence and sovereignty. I hope you will make it possible for us to work with you toward these objectives. I assure you that as long as you do so, you will have my unfailing support and friendship."

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Brown should then elaborate as follows:

1. As demonstrated by the letter he had just read, the advice previously given him by Harriman and Brown stemmed directly from the President's own position that Phoumi must make every effort to facilitate the formation of a government of national union under Souvanna. The achievement of this goal required the allocation of the Defense and Interior portfolios to the center group. The US would, of course, support Phoumi in obtaining two other important posts for his right-wing group. The US would also expect Phoumi to negotiate effectively on the remaining posts so that the composition of the cabinet would be acceptable.

2. Recent military operations had given incontrovertible proof of the FAR's military weakness as compared with the Pathet Lao and Viet Minh. Thus, since Phoumi could not win militarily, his only hope for his own future lay in the formation of a Souvanna government and in his participating in and cooperating fully with it. If he did so participate and cooperate, the US would continue to befriend him.

3. Unless Phoumi, within 24 hours, gave Brown "his solemn pledge" to negotiate in good faith, not to hold out for Defense and Interior, and to "press for earliest meeting [at] Luang Prabang with at least Souvanna, even if Souphanouvong does not attend," the United States would be unable any longer to regard Phoumi as a "man we can work with and will immediately break off contact with him." The King, the Prime Minister, and all other responsible Lao officials would be notified of this decision and advised that the situation presented a "grave obstacle to continued US/Lao cooperation." The reason for cutting off relations just with Phoumi rather than with the RLG was that the US did not wish to "penalize the Lao people for [the] self-seeking stubbornness of one of its leaders."

4. Phoumi must realize that US public opinion would not tolerate a military intervention by US forces, particularly now that a peaceful settlement was clearly possible.

The Ambassador was advised that if Phoumi forced the United States to break with him, the US objective would be to bring about a sufficient reorganization of the RLG to permit continued negotiations for the formation of a new government. Failing this, the US might have to apply sanctions and would not in any case make the February cash deposit until satisfied with developments.

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 668, 669, 27 Jan 62.

27 Jan 62

At the request of the State Department, Soviet Charge Smirnovsky called on Assistant Secretary Harriman. After reviewing the US efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement of the Lao problem, Harriman expressed the hope that the next meeting of the three Princes would enable the Lao factions to form a government of national union and send a united delegation, representing that government, to the Geneva Conference.

It was obviously essential, Harriman cautioned, that this favorable trend not be upset by military provocations from either side. The United States, disturbed by reports of the increasing number of incidents and countermoves by both sides, believed it was to the interest of all parties concerned that these activities be stopped, and that both the US and the USSR use their influence to keep the cease-fire intact. Harriman referred to the Sullivan-Pushkin conversation in Geneva (see item 7 January 1962), repeating the proposition that if the US found it necessary to increase pressure on the Boun Oum-Phoumi faction by withholding aid, thereby weakening the RLG militarily, the US would need assurances from the Soviets that they would make certain that the Pathet Lao did not take advantage of the situation by launching a military offensive against the RLG forces. Harriman noted that no indication of the position of the Soviet Government on this matter had yet been received.

Harriman also said that if the meetings between the three Princes were to be successful, all parties to the negotiations must display a spirit of give and take. Prince Souphanouvong had made no contribution to a reasonable spirit of negotiation; some of his public statements had been contentious and he had not attended several of the agreed-upon meetings. The US hoped, continued Harriman, that the Soviet Government would influence Souphanouvong to refrain from unhelpful statements and would urge him to negotiate with the other Princes in a spirit of compromise and good will.

(In Moscow, on 29 January, Ambassador Thompson "repeated virtually [the] entire representation" to Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetsov. In reply the latter did not go beyond saying that the Soviet Government was doing its utmost to achieve a successful conclusion to the negotiations, in accordance with the Khrushchev-Kennedy agreement reached at Vienna to establish Laos as a neutral country.)

(S) Msgs, SecState to Moscow, 1758, 28 Jan 62; Moscow to SecState, 2075, 29 Jan 62.

27 Jan 62 The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Young that the US could not give general assurances concerning its course of action in Laos in the event a Souvanna government showed signs of failing, beyond the points already made by Harriman in this regard (see item 18 January 1962). Sarit might be informed, however, that the US was prepared to give personal assurances to Phoumi and his chief followers that in such an event they would be treated generously, provided that they cooperated in good faith in the present negotiations.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1088, 27 Jan 62.

28 Jan 62 The RLG delegation at Geneva circulated a note addressed to the Co-Chairmen the previous day that called attention to "dangerous aggravation" of the military situation by a Pathet Lao advance near Nam Tha and to the purported presence of Viet Minh Battalion 316, with Chinese and Russian elements, near Muong Sai and Parbeng. Condemning this as a violation of the cease-fire, the note urged that Co-Chairmen to ask the ICC (whom the RLG had already notified of the matter) to investigate at once, and also to inform the various Conference delegations of these events.

(U) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1103, 28 Jan 62.

28 Jan 62 Ambassador Young reported to the Secretary of State that the Thai were experiencing difficulty in arranging a meeting with Phoumi (see item 27 January 1962). It was possible, the Ambassador observed, that Phoumi would avoid meeting Sarit if he thought Sarit would not back him fully. In that event, there was little the US could do but press Sarit either to send Phoumi a "satisfactory" message or simply not to send adverse advice. Young warned the Department that Sarit and Thanat were having second thoughts over any meeting with Phoumi and were showing an inclination toward a neutral stand in the Lao situation, leaving the US to exert any pressures on Phoumi. Sarit had told Ambassador Young on 27 January that he was "fed up" talking about Laos and wanted to limit their conversations to Thailand. Sarit's message of 27 January to Phoumi reflected this change in view. Sarit had merely passed on the US message to Phoumi and counseled him to make up his own mind. Moreover, this was the only message sent to Phoumi during the last week; the message Sarit had dictated in the Ambassador's presence on 24 January had not gone out (see item 23, 24 January 1962). Ambassador Young suggested that US interests might be better served by encouraging Sarit to adopt a neutral silence rather than by continuing the attempt to induce him to send effective messages to Phoumi. The Ambassador requested guidance on whether he should encourage Thai neutrality.

Replying the same day, the Acting Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Young to continue pressing the Thai to get Phoumi to Bangkok or to send Phoumi a message, in terms much stronger than those of Sarit's 27 January message, urging him to cooperate in the Lao peace settlement. The US was planning "drastic and irrevocable" action against Phoumi if he failed to cooperate (see item 27 January 1962). Ambassador Young was instructed, if he considered it desirable, to inform Sarit of these intentions without going into great detail. The US considered it particularly important that Sarit tell Phoumi that he could not rely on Thai support if he broke with the US. Sarit might be "fed up" talking about Laos, the State Department added, but the US was likewise sorely tried by Sarit's encouraging Phoumi to defy US policy, particularly now that Sarit had received reassurances of US support (see item 27 January 1962).

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1082, 28 Jan 62; SecState to Bangkok, 1093, 28 Jan 62.

29 Jan 62 In a meeting with Ambassador Brown, Phoumi stated that he and Boun Oum would be in Luang Prabang on 2 February and would be available for discussions with Souvanna if he wished them. Although he continued to regard it as absolutely essential that he retain some means of protecting the anti-Communist position, Phoumi was searching for a formula for composition of a government that would be broadly compatible with the agreement signed at Geneva (see item 19 January 1962). He professed to be having difficulty in inducing his cabinet colleagues to agree to any formula by which the Defense and Interior posts would be conceded to the center group in exchange for other important ministries. Cabinet discussions were to continue and would soon be

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influenced by the return of the five members of the government who had stopped to test sentiment in Washington, at the UN, and elsewhere on their way home from Geneva. (see item 23 January 1962).

Brown asked if he could inform the State Department that Phoumi had given his personal assurance that he was now working for a solution based on Defense and Interior in the center. Phoumi replied, "Not yet. Wait a few days."

Phoumi said he had received a message from Sarit on 27 January, telling him of the arguments the US had been using with Sarit and asking Phoumi to come to Bangkok for discussions. Phoumi had been unable to do so, and Sarit had then sent another message repeating almost completely the memorandum the US had given Sarit (see item 28 January 1962) and saying it might be best for Phoumi to follow the American advice.

Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that Phoumi was "subdued and evidently somewhat shaken in his position, probably by Sarit's advice," but was not yet ready to give in. Brown had thought it best not to apply more severe pressure to Phoumi until there had been time for Sarit's message really to sink in and be conveyed to the cabinet.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1059, 29 Jan 62.

29 Jan 62 Ambassador Brown explained the US position with regard to a neutral Laotian government to King Savang and urged the monarch to use his influence with Phoumi and Boun Oum to get them to agree that the Defense and Interior posts in such a government be held by the center group, provided they were satisfactorily manned and other portfolios were satisfactorily distributed and manned.

King Savang did not specifically agree to use his influence with regard to these ministries. After a long and rambling discourse he conceded that if Souvanna would agree that Defense and Interior should go to independent and responsible persons - not to Souvanna and Pheng Phongsavan - then Phoumi would have a basis for yielding these positions.

During the course of his remarks, the King referred indignantly to a proposal of Boun Oum's that the King take over power. He had refused to do so. Only if all negotiations broke down and fighting began again would he take power, if his people asked him to.

Ambassador Brown believed that the King understood but disagreed with the US position. He was little hope that the King would make any effort to induce Phoumi and Boun Oum to follow the US advice regarding assignment of the Defense and Interior Ministries.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1062, 29 Jan 62.

29 Jan 62 While passing through Rangoon en route to Laos, Souvanna had a brief exchange with US Ambassador Everton. The latter transmitted a message to Souvanna, in which Harriman stated that Boun Oum and Phoumi were closer than in the past to

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relinquishing their claim to the Defense and Interior Ministries and urged Souvanna to respond generously in other areas of negotiations should they do so.

Souvanna countered that he had recently been informed by Boun Oum that the latter was still undecided on the question and that he could only "consider" it if he received two out of the three Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance, and Information (see item 27 January 1962). However, Souphanouvong had asked for Information and had opposed the granting of Foreign Affairs and Finance to Boun Oum and Phoumi. Souvanna hoped to eliminate the problem by reserving these positions for his own group. (US officials were later informed that Souvanna had remarked that the Foreign Minister post was not important since he himself would determine foreign policy.)

To Harriman's expression of hope that Souphanouvong would attend the proposed meeting at Luang Prabang, Souvanna replied that he intended to see Boun Oum at Luang Prabang but that it would be better to confer separately with Souphanouvong, since a combined meeting might simply lead to friction. He could call such a meeting in the future, after the ground had been carefully prepared.

Everton also informed Souvanna that Harriman was extremely concerned by reports of new military activity in Laos. The United States was doing everything possible to restrain the FAR, and it was hoped that Souvanna "would do likewise." Souvanna stated that "insofar as he knew" no military build up was taking place. The supplies entering by road and air from North Viet Nam consisted of food stuffs, POL, and construction materials, not military equipment. (Souvanna later repeated these remarks, citing the absence of local supplies in the Xieng Khouang area, and his control of those imported, as the basis for his influence on the Pathet Lao forces.) Souvanna went on to state categorically that FAR units had launched attacks at various points, including Milsa and Mahaxay, that he had so informed the ICC and various diplomats, and that "obviously if attacks were made it would be necessary to resist them." Everton replied that the United States would be "seriously disturbed" if military action should upset progress toward a peaceful solution of the Laotian problem.

Souvanna spoke further on the Laotian situation at an informal dinner later in the day. He admitted that the Pathet Lao presented a great danger to the course he was attempting to follow, but he believed this was a problem with which the "Lao must deal themselves." Souvanna emphasized that a settlement must be reached soon if the new government was to have the support of the majority of the Lao people; if the present unsettled conditions persisted, the people would become alienated and more receptive to Communism. He spoke highly of Secretary Harriman and praised his statement (see item 16 January 1962) favoring the allocation of the Defense and Interior portfolios to Souvanna. Souvanna then said that if the United States really backed this statement, it could force agreement on

Boun Oum and Phoumi concerning the cabinet posts since they were "completely dependent" on US support. The objections of a US official to this remark led Souvanna to modify but not withdraw it. As to the current fighting at Nam Tha, Souvanna said that he had been asked for permission to attack the town before he had left for Geneva, but had refused. He assumed that the offensive had been provoked by Phoumi's attacks near Thakhek and Milsa.

(S) Msgs, SecState to Rangoon, 407, 27 Jan 62; Rangoon to SecState, 533, 29 Jan 62; (C) Msg, Rangoon to SecState, 542, 30 Jan 62.

29 Jan 62 Ambassador Young reported to the Secretary of State that General Phoumi had sent a "scorching" reply to Sarit's request that he use moderation and accept the coalition government. Phoumi vowed that he would yield nothing and would fight on alone if the US withdrew its aid. As a result of this reply, Sarit had decided not to renew his invitation to Phoumi to come to Bangkok, and not to send General Wallop to Laos to confer with Phoumi. In fact, on the recommendation of his advisors, Sarit had decided to withdraw entirely from this "political matter," leaving the task of pressuring Phoumi to the US representatives in Laos. Ambassador Young advised the Secretary of State, however, that he would continue his efforts to gain Thai cooperation in inducing Phoumi to accept the US position.

(On the next day, Thanat told Ambassador Young that he still wanted General Wallop to meet with Phoumi in Laos and that he had carefully briefed the General on a point-by-point answer to Phoumi's message in the event Sarit agreed to send him. Thanat claimed that Phoumi's message had proved that he was not the Thai puppet that some people had assumed.)

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1089, 29 Jan 62; 1101, 31 Jan 62.

29,30
Jan 62

Ambassador Brown replied to the Department's instruction to him of 27 January (see item) by pointing out that to cut off contact with Phoumi while continuing to support the RLG and FAR would have no effect on Phoumi; it would simply cut off the US from knowledge of what was going on. It was unrealistic, according to Brown, to try to distinguish between Phoumi and the RLG. Phoumi was the RLG; the other members were either for him or afraid of him. To break with Phoumi would, therefore, have little or no effect in bringing about a reorganization of the RLG. Brown thought that the only way to influence Phoumi was by applying really effective sanctions.

The State Department reply of 29 January indicated that Washington officials were unmoved by this argument, since they could not believe that "Lao politicians and military leaders are so devoted [to] Phoumi personally that if they saw he were completely cut off by US they would all follow him into personal and national disaster." In an additional comment referring to Brown's report of 26 January (see item) that had sharply up-graded the estimate of the number of Viet Minh troops in Laos, the State Department suggested that his concern that sanctions might

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weaken the FAR at a critical time was "not really relevant as FAR now clearly incapable stem PL/VM offensive. Incidentally Pushkin has constantly made it plain he would be responsible for holding back Communist side until agreement signed." (For a contrary indication by Harriman, see item 27 January 1962.)

Renewing his argument on 30 January, Ambassador Brown observed that by the time an agreement was signed, "Vietminh may well occupy further substantial portions [of] Laos. I had hoped that holding back should be reciprocal." On the main point he wrote, "I continue to feel that type of ultimatum proposed . . . will be ineffective because it really does nothing to Phoumi . . . and since no Lao (not to mention our allies and the Soviets) is going to feel Phoumi 'is completely cut off by U.S.' as long as we continue to furnish economic and military support to a government which he controls." Brown recommended that the President's letter, "which is calculated [to] appeal to Phoumi's amour propre and ambition as well as convey definite warning," be delivered on 31 January, but that the ultimate be withheld "until we have one with teeth."

In reply, the Secretary of State authorized Brown to present the President's letter to Phoumi, accompanied by points 1, 2, and 4 of the instructions of 27 January but omitting the 24-hour ultimatum contained in point 3.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1058, 29 Jan 62; 1063, 30 Jan 62; SecState to Vientiane, 676, 29 Jan 62; 678, 30 Jan 62.

29 Jan-
2 Feb 62

The Geneva Conference lapsed into inactivity, as interest focused on the meeting scheduled to begin at Luang Prabang on 2 February 1962. Many delegates left Geneva, either temporarily or permanently.

During an informal meeting between the US, UK, French, and Canadian delegations on 1 February, at which recent developments were summarized and discussed, MacDonald referred to the impact of Sarit's messages to Phoumi, and commented that US influence had been "both decisive and timely in helping [to] resolve Thai doubts and hesitations."

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1109, 2 Feb 62.

30 Jan 62

The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), William P. Bundy, recommended to the Secretary of Defense that the President, before deciding to apply sanctions against Phoumi and the RLG, should have the benefit of a full discussion of the alternative suggested by Ambassador Brown and his Country Team (see item 9 January 1962): a coalition government under Souvanna at Luang Prabang, with two Deputy Prime Ministers, Phoumi and Souphanouvong, heading administrative centers at Vientiane and Khang Khay respectively. According to Bundy, current US policy in Laos had three objectives: to avoid the loss of Laos; to avoid committing US forces in Laos; and to establish, therefore, a neutral, independent Laos under Souvanna. This policy had several recognized risks, Bundy said. Souvanna might not be as sympathetic to the Free World as he appeared, and even if he were sympathetic he might not have the political power

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to free himself from Communist influence. Moreover, the Soviets might not be fully sincere in their professed intention to keep Laos neutral and to prevent its use as a corridor to South Viet Nam. Even if sincere, they might not have the necessary control over Communist China and North Viet Nam to carry out their intent.

Although the US was willing to accept these risks, the RLG was not. The RLG believed with some cause that acquiescence in a Souvanna government would be suicidal. The RLG was deeply disturbed by such factors as Souvanna's inability to muster substantial political backing and the several thousand Viet Minh troops dominating northern Laos. The RLG was also concerned that the US had thus far produced no concrete courses of action for use if, as was possible, Souvanna was unable to maintain effective neutrality and independence.

Against continued RLG refusal to accept the Western negotiating position, US policy provided only two alternatives to cease supporting the RLG and deal directly with Souvanna and other available Lao politicians; or to accede in Phoumi's request for continued support against Communist pressures. The Department of State would consider the latter alternative an "unacceptable backdown" to Phoumi and a failure to meet the US commitment of supporting Souvanna. Such a course would also probably result in continued hostilities. The former alternative would "most likely" result in the collapse of strong anti-Communist participation in a coalition government, thereby facilitating Communist domination of Laos.

None of the above results would achieve US policy objectives, Bundy continued. The Laos Country Team proposal appeared to offer some opportunity to do so. The proposal did have the many disadvantages listed by the Country Team, and it would probably be initially opposed by the UK and France. The Communist Bloc would certainly oppose vehemently but would probably accept the arrangement in the end, inasmuch as it reflected the realities of power in Laos. The US might, by exercising "great firmness," achieve the objective proposed by the Country Team. (For the discussion with US Allies that had already occurred, see item 14-18 January 1962.)

(TS) Memo, DepAsstSecDef (ISA) to SecDef, ISA Doc. No. I-25, 137/62, [30 Jan 62]; OSD (ISA) FER/SEA Br. Files.

31 Jan 62

By Special National Intelligence Estimate 58/1-62, the United States Intelligence Board (USIB) substantially modified its conclusions of 11 January (see item) regarding the relative capabilities of the opposing forces in Laos. Recalling that it had warned in its earlier estimate that improvements in the government forces' morale, motivation, and leadership had not been proven in combat, the USIB reported that military clashes during January (see items 11; 20; 21-24, and 26 January) had resulted each time in the withdrawal or dispersal of government troops.

In each engagement, the presence of Viet Minh troops among the enemy forces was suspected (the total number of Viet Minh troops in Laos now being estimated at 9,000, rather than the 5,000 assumed in the earlier SNIE), and the

government forces had shown themselves to be greatly afraid of the Viet Minh and unable to deal with any substantial number of them.

While the performances of the FAR units had not been as bad as some performances given immediately before the May 1961 cease-fire, they had nonetheless been bad enough for the USIB to conclude that the FAR was not the equal of the anti-government forces. The anti-government forces were now judged capable of maintaining their main forward positions and of conducting local operations to counter aggressive government moves. Without further reinforcements, the enemy could seize and hold certain key positions now held by government troops. Reinforced by additional Viet Minh combat troops, they could quickly overrun the remainder of Laos.

(S) SNIE 58/1-62, 31 Jan 62.

31 Jan 62 Ambassador Brown, acting on the Secretary of State's instructions of the previous day (see item 29, 30 January 1962), delivered the President's letter to Phoumi and presented points 1, 2 and 4 of the instructions of 27 January (see item). Phoumi replied that he was not yet able to say definitely whether he would be able to agree to a government of national union in which the Defense and Interior posts were held by members of Souvanna's center group. Phoumi claimed to be trying "to work for the best," taking into account the views of both the US and the "international attitude" favoring such a solution and the political parties in Vientiane that opposed it.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1071, 31 Jan 62.

31 Jan 62 The RLG delegation at Geneva, following up its previous submission (see item 28 January 1962), presented a note to the Conference Co-Chairman protesting the "serious aggression" in the Muong Sai and Parbeng areas by what it identified as "Viet Minh Battalion 316 reinforced by foreign elements." The note requested the Co-Chairmen to demand that the Viet Minh withdraw all troops from Lao territory at once and refrain from further aggressive acts. The RLG note also asked that the matter be brought to the attention of the Conference delegations.

(U) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1107, 2 Feb 62.

1 Feb 62

As requested, the US Ambassador in Vientiane suggested to the Secretary of State a series of actions designed "to show our disgust here with Phoumi's behavior" and offered his evaluation of the effect of these measures. According to Ambassador Brown, the US could: 1) instruct all its personnel to cease contacts with Phoumi; 2) have the Ambassador deal only with Boun Oum or with ministers other than Phoumi; 3) tell King Savang of its conviction that Phoumi was blocking a peaceful solution, thus acting contrary to the best interests of both Laos and the US; and 4) inform the press of this boycott of Phoumi.

The Ambassador, however, doubted that such a boycott, whether merely threatened or actually imposed, would have any effect on Phoumi. He believed, moreover, that a US boycott of Phoumi would serve only to alienate the King, Boun Oum, and the Lao people in general. Merely to express disapproval of Phoumi's actions was not, in the Ambassador's opinion, enough to rally opposition to Phoumi. Instead, the US should, at the least, continue to withhold cash deposits and announce this policy. Military sanctions, the Ambassador believed, not only would be more effective but would be felt more keenly by Phoumi himself.

Although admittedly unable to state the official views of the British, French, and Australian Governments, Ambassador Brown predicted that, if asked, their Ambassadors at Vientiane would agree that a US boycott of Phoumi could not be effective and would recommend against joining in such a venture.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1076, 1 Feb 62.

1 Feb 62

At the request of the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, Adzhubei, Khrushchev's son-in-law, called for a short talk on Laos. Harriman, noting that Phoumi had "apparently fallen back" from the position he had taken at Geneva, said that the US could not be sure what would happen at the forthcoming Phoumi-Souvanna meeting. The Assistant Secretary emphasized, however, that the President was determined to go through with the agreement reached in Geneva (see item 19 January 1962), if this were at all possible. Both the US and the USSR, he stressed, should be patient and make every effort to keep the Lao factions from fighting.

In the process of obtaining a peaceful settlement, Harriman pointed out, it might become necessary for the US to place sanctions on Phoumi that would weaken him militarily. The US could not do this, if there was a military threat from the other side.

Adzhubei's reply to Harriman's statement was non-committal, but he did voice his conviction that "no obstacle to accommodation in Laos existed."

(C) Msg, SecState to Moscow, 1786, 1 Feb 62.

1 Feb 62 CHMAAG Laos reported to CINCPAC that Nam Tha airfield was being hit by enemy mortar fire. He considered this a definite violation of the cease-fire and perhaps of particular significance owing to its timing in relation to the scheduled resumption of negotiations between Souvanna and Phoumi in Luang Prabang the following day. (For Boun Oum's message to Souvanna canceling this meeting, see later item 1 February 1962.)

As early as 25 January three enemy guns, presumed to be 75-mm. cannon, had been observed in emplacements on the high ground east of the airfield. On 27-28 January, FAR positions were subjected to mortar fire. When the airlift of the 30th Infantry Battalion was completed, FAR forces planned an offensive to retake the heights round the city, and in preparation a series of T-6 strikes on enemy gun positions had been made on 30-31 January. However, the shelling of the airfield on 1 February forced the FAR commander to evacuate the T-6s to Luang Prabang and to give up the proposed offensive.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 197320, 26 Jan 62; DA IN 197728, 29 Jan 62; DA IN 200524-S, 7 Feb 62; (S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 198422, 1 Feb 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1124, 8 Feb 62.

1 Feb 62 As of this date US Army Special Forces in Laos, organized into 52 field teams, had a total of 432 personnel. In addition, there were 253 military personnel in MAAG, administering the Military Assistance Program.

(TS-NOFORN) J-3, Southeast Asia SITREP #5-62, 1 Feb 62.

1 Feb 62 CHMAAG Laos replied to a JCS request for an appraisal of the effect on the safety of US personnel and on the advisory effort of various sanctions that might be imposed on the RLG. He stated that any sanction would tend to undermine FAR-MAAG relationships, would result in at least minor harassment of the MAAG, and might endanger the safety of US personnel, particularly those with combat units. The types of sanctions he had considered were, in order of severity: 1) suspension of military supplies and financial support; 2) withdrawal of contract air support for the resupply of field troops, in addition to (1); 3) withdrawal of field teams from forward combat elements, in addition to (1) and (2); 4) suspension of the advisory effort of all levels, in addition to (1), (2) and (3). The temporary withholding of funds in January had resulted in coolness, and in one or two cases in ill-concealed hostility, on the part of FAR commanders at the Group Mobile and lower level. There was evidence also, CHMAAG reported, that concern had even spread to the Meos in the Plaine des Jarres area.

The more severe sanctions or the reapplication of the temporary suspension of funds would bring progressively quicker and more serious reactions, CHMAAG

pointed out. Danger to US personnel would arise chiefly from the possibility of offensive operations undertaken either by the FAR, in the realization of diminishing capabilities in the absence of US aid and in the hope of attracting support, or by the enemy, to take advantage of the weakened FAR. There was also the possibility of isolated cases of reprisals by FAR unit commanders against US field teams.

CHMAAG assured the JCS that, on the imposition of any new sanctions, he would remain alert to the necessity of withdrawing advisory teams from forward units. If a general withdrawal of field teams became necessary, he suggested they be returned to their home stations, as their continued presence in Laos might lead to serious friction. Emergency evacuation plans included not only US, but also Thai and Filipino personnel, CHMAAG continued. Timely notice of the impending imposition of severe sanctions would be necessary, he concluded, in order to ensure the safety of personnel.

(S) Msgs, JCS to CHMAAG Laos, JCS 3098, 30 Jan 62; CHMAAG Laos to JCS, DA IN 198730, 1 Feb 62.

1 Feb 62

Boun Oum requested the ICC to convey a message from him to Souvanna pointing out that the attack on Nam Tha was an obstacle to the projected meeting at Luang Prabang. The message asked Souvanna to withdraw his forces 15 kilometers from Nam Tha and stated that Souvanna's arrival at Luang Prabang "can not be contemplated until after this withdrawal."

Reporting that enemy fire against the Nam Tha airfield was continuing, Ambassador Brown advised the Secretary of State that he viewed Boun Oum's refusal to negotiate under enemy pressure with "considerable sympathy." He did not believe the issue was one on which the US should try to force the RLG to yield. Brown suggested instead that "now is the time for Souvanna to show strength and good faith," particularly in view of his statement to an ICC member that day that his forces had no orders to attack Nam Tha. Brown reported that he had requested the Canadian member of the ICC to make a renewed effort to get the ICC into Nam Tha.

The Secretary of State replied to Brown that he "should convey to RLG our view that they have themselves largely to blame for Nam Tha situation, and ultimatum [Boun Oum's message to Souvanna] will be regarded by world as another effort [to] avoid negotiations. Attack on Nam Tha was probably a result of injudicious activities by FAR and failure [of] RLG [to] come to agreement on coalition government." Brown should urge the RLG to request Souvanna to come to Luang Prabang as soon as it appeared that the attacks had ceased.

Ambassador Brown replied on 2 February that he had urged Phoumi, through General Boyle and Hasey separately,

to proceed immediately with the Luang Prabang meeting if the attacks ceased and the enemy withdrew or if the ICC was stationed at Nam Tha. Phoumi assured them both that the moment an ICC team was stationed at Nam Tha he would proceed to Luang Prabang for discussions with Souvanna.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1083, 1 Feb 62; SecState CIRC 1348, 1 Feb 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1088, 2 Feb 62.

2 Feb 62

Foreign Minister Thanat told Ambassador Young that the Thai Government had advised Phoumi that the situation was very serious and that while the Thai were aware of the difficulties of his position, they counseled him to be "flexible." On the same day, Young heard from the RLG Ambassador to Thailand, just returned from Vientiane, that Phoumi had received several "very useful" communications from Sarit. This and the President's letter (see items 27 and 31 January 1962), according to the RLG Ambassador, had made Phoumi more "understanding."

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1119, 2 Feb 62.

2-7
Feb 62

With reinforcements flown in to Nam Tha during this period, FAR forces established a crescent-shaped line of defense about two miles east of town from which an occasional patrol was sent out into the surrounding countryside. From the heights beyond the perimeter of defense, the enemy maintained an intermittent fire on the airfield and town with 120-mm. mortars. Normal operations at the airfield remained suspended throughout the period. However, on four successive days ending on 6 February FAR aircraft transported the 28th Infantry Battalion with Headquarters, Group Mobile 18, to Nam Tha by employing T-6s for aircover and to suppress enemy mortar fire while the carrier planes were on the ground at the airfield. The senior member of the MAAG staff reported that the T-6s were doing a "good job" in this respect, but that their 5-inch rockets were of limited value for destroying dug-in heavy weapons.

In the two weeks and a half from 21 January to 7 February, FAR forces reported their casualties in the Nam Tha area to be one man killed and nineteen wounded.

FAR strength at Nam Tha on 7 February totalled five battalions, comprising Headquarters, GM-11, with 1st and 2d Infantry Battalions and 13th Volunteer Battalion, and Headquarters, GM-18, with the 28th and 30th Infantry Battalions. Enemy forces in the vicinity were reported to consist of five battalions with four 120-mm. mortars, plus a unit of unknown strength, but CHMAAG expressed doubt about the accuracy of the report.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 198802, 1 Feb 62; DA IN 198926, 2 Feb 62; DA IN 199515, 3 Feb 62; DA IN 199570, 4 Feb 62; DA IN 200552, 5 Feb 62; DA IN 200015, 6 Feb 62; DA IN 200524, 7 Feb 62; DA IN 201031, 8 Feb 62; (S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 199355, 3 Feb 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1124, 8 Feb 62.

3 Feb 62

Phoumi informed the ICC that he would be willing to proceed with the Luang Prabang meeting with Souvanna if he received ICC certification that the enemy had withdrawn 15 kilometers from Nam Tha or if an ICC team was established there. Meanwhile, Ambassadors Addis and Abramov had developed a proposal for dealing with the Nam Tha situation, which they presented to the ICC in the following terms: the ICC would appeal to the three Princes to convoke the Lao cease-fire commission, whose first task would be to reaffirm the cease-fire; the ICC would stand ready to assist the commission in any way it desired, including the dispatch of observer teams to sensitive areas.

The ICC approved the proposal and presented it to Phoumi, who agreed to it provided the other side issued an order to its forces reaffirming the cease-fire effective 4 February. Phoumi was prepared to issue a similar order to the FAR.

The ICC then flew to Khang Khay and presented the proposal to Souvanna and Souphanouvong. These two Princes agreed to a meeting of the cease-fire commission but insisted that a written cease-fire agreement between the three parties be signed before the issuance of a new cease-fire declaration. ICC observers could not be used until after the signing of the agreement. Meetings of the cease-fire commission would have to be at Khang Khay.

Phoumi, upon being informed of this decision, broadcast a statement that the two Khang Khay Princes had refused his appeal for a cease-fire on all fronts. He also informed a MAAG officer that he was contemplating an appeal to SEATO and had sent a message to Sarit asking his advice.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1095, 1097,
3 Feb 62.

3 Feb 62

Acting on instructions from the Secretary of State to advise the Soviet Government, in its role as Co-Chairman, that the "PL/VM attack" on Nam Tha was endangering the continuation of negotiations among the three Princes, Ambassador Thomposn saw Pushkin in Moscow. The instructions called the Nam Tha assault "a flagrant breach of the cease-fire" and stressed that the US Government could not put sufficiently strong pressures on the RLG to negotiate in good faith when the RLG forces were thus under attack. In making this point to Pushkin, Ambassador Thompson emphasized the fact that the US Government had constantly to take public opinion into consideration. Hence the US would find it difficult to bring pressure to bear on the RLG at a time when it was well known to the public that a major PL offensive was going on.

Pushkin replied that the Nam Tha attack was merely a response to one of the many offensive actions of the FAR launched by Phoumi and should not be viewed as having any connection with the negotiations among the three Princes. The Soviet Union stood for strict

enforcement of the cease-fire, but the only language Phoumi seemed to understand was a reply to his actions with greater force. Ambassador Thompson reported that Pushkin had given "no undertaking whatever" to attempt to change the conditions that prevented the United States from using its influence effectively, but the Ambassador believed that the argument regarding the relationship of US policy to public opinion had made an impression. In a follow-up move requested of the British Government by the State Department, the British Ambassador was scheduled to see Pushkin later the same day.

(S) Msgs, Moscow to SecState, 2109, 3 Feb 62;
SecState CIRC, 1348, 1 Feb 62.

4 Feb 62

Ambassador Brown, having received the report of a MAAG officer returned from Nam Tha that the town and its airstrip were under intermittent fire and that Phoumi planned both to commit another battalion to Nam Tha's defense and to employ T-6 aircraft against the enemy mortar batteries, gave the Secretary of State his opinion that the enemy's continued bombardment of the town and airstrip was "clearly unjustified." Accordingly the Ambassador did not see how the US could advise Phoumi not to defend himself or refuse helicopter lift to help him do so.

The instructions immediately returned by the Secretary of State agreed that the continued bombardment was unjustified but held that further RLG reinforcement was inadvisable. Noting that the addition of one battalion would not be sufficient to hold Nam Tha but could be provocative and lead to further attacks, the Secretary said that the "best way to save Nam Tha and in fact all of Laos is through negotiations."

In accordance with the instructions, Ambassador Brown and General Boyle advised Phoumi as follows: 1) an appeal to SEATO (see item 3 February 1962) would be useless and undesirable, and the US would oppose a SEATO response to an RLG appeal; 2) if Nam Tha was not under bombardment the next day, he should make no T-6 attack against the opposing batteries; 3) while the US would not insist on the move, it would be a constructive gesture for Phoumi to send representatives to the Plaine des Jarres to discuss a cease-fire, by which he might gain both practical results and favorable world opinion; and 4) he should inform the ICC of his eagerness to reaffirm the cease-fire, his willingness to have the ICC participate in the Laotian cease-fire commission's work, and his desire to have ICC observers stationed at Nam Tha.

Phoumi replied that his ideas were very similar to those of the US. However, in view of the continuing attacks on Nam Tha, he felt that a meeting of military representatives would be unproductive unless preceded by cease-fire orders issued by both sides.

General Boyle advised Phoumi that the dispatch of another battalion to Nam Tha would be an unwise commitment of troops, while Brown pointed out the danger of

its being considered provocative. Phoumi replied that the contemplated movement was not a reinforcement but a replacement of demoralized troops that were to be withdrawn in the same planes that brought in the new unit. He rejected Brown's suggestion that he tell the ICC he was maintaining but not augmenting his force, on the ground that this would give the enemy important information.

Ambassador Brown informed Phoumi that he had been instructed by the Secretary of State to try to get Ambassadors Addis and Abramov, as representatives of the Geneva Co-Chairmen, to go to Xieng Khouang to persuade Souvarna and Souphanouvong to drop their demand that a written cease-fire agreement must precede the dispatch of ICC observers to Nam Tha (see item 3 February 1962).

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1098, 1099, 4 Feb 62; SecState to Vientiane, 696, 3 Feb 62.

4 Feb 62

With Presidential agreement, the Secretary of State ordered Ambassador Young to give the Thai Government "full assurances and explanations" regarding the Manila Pact in order to relieve Thai concern over continued SEATO effectiveness. In view of US obligations under SEATO, the US saw no reason for a bilateral defense treaty as proposed by Thailand. Such an additional treaty would be difficult to defend in the US Congress and would perhaps result in less, rather than more, US aid to Thailand. If the Thai Government destroyed SEATO by irresponsible and unwarranted actions or boycotted the Paris meeting, it would also destroy the legal basis of US bilateral obligations to Thailand. After presenting several other arguments, the Secretary of State mentioned that as evidence of its good faith, the US had in the past raised the possibility of stationing US combat troops in Thailand. This had not been acceptable to the Thai Government. At the present, the US was sending a US engineer battalion to Thailand for road construction, which would increase the US military presence in the area. The Secretary also outlined US offers of economic assistance to Thailand as further proof of US concern for Thailand's well-being. (For Ambassador Young's presentation of the above, see item 12 February 1962.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1134, 4 Feb 62.

4, 5
Feb 62

The Secretary of State suggested to Ambassador Thompson that he and British Ambassador Roberts renew the approach they had made to Soviet officials regarding the Nam Tha situation on 3 February (see item). The United States could not accept Pushkin's contention that there was no connection between the action at Nam Tha and the negotiations to form a Laotian government. The Secretary pointed out that the Nam Tha attack was exactly the type of aggressive Pathet Lao action that made it impossible for the United States to exert effective pressure on Phoumi to negotiate in good faith. The avoidance of this very situation had been the object of the approaches made by Sullivan and Harriman to Soviet officials earlier (see items 7 and 27 January 1962) seeking

assurances that if the United States imposed strong sanctions on Phoumi the USSR could be relied upon to prevent any Pathet Lao military action taking advantage of the weakened state of the RLG. The United States believed that the RLG had taken a reasonable stand in the current situation, namely, that if the enemy forces ceased their attack and withdrew from the immediate vicinity of Nam Tha, or if ICC representatives were permitted to visit the scene, Phoumi and Boun Oum were prepared to go forward with the negotiations in Luang Prabang. Continuation of the negotiations, therefore, depended on Soviet efforts to persuade Souvanna and Souphanouvong to allow either of these conditions to come about.

In a further message less than ten hours later the Secretary directed an urgent approach to the Soviets to express "most serious concern" over a report that Nam Tha was under heavy attack and to suggest that if not stopped forthwith, this development might vitiate the hope of a peaceful settlement in Laos.

Before receipt in Moscow of the second, more urgent message, Ambassador Roberts met with Pushkin on 5 February. As Thompson reported it, "Pushkin was equally negative but rougher in his reaction than on previous visit." He charged that Phoumi was seeking to wreck the negotiations by aggressive military actions and other hindrances to Souvanna's efforts that were designed to provoke Souvanna to the point of walking out. The Soviet Union was angry at the "game being played" and believed that "Phoumi must be put in his place." Pushkin's reaction appeared to confirm the impression Thompson had already received that the Soviets would do nothing to prevent the capture of Nam Tha.

(S) Msgs, SecState to Moscow, 1807, 4 Feb 62; 1808, 5 Feb 62; Moscow to SecState, 2122, 2126, 5 Feb 62.

4, 5
Feb 62

A series of meetings in Vientiane of Ambassadors Addis, Abromov, Brown and the ICC failed to produce agreement on a way to bring about negotiations between the three Princes for a Lao government of national unity. Abramov, supported by the Polish ICC representative, maintained that Souvanna would not make a declaration reaffirming the cease-fire, as proposed by Phoumi, because he had no faith in Phoumi's word. Phoumi, maintained the Russian, was "gravely at fault" because of his provocative military actions. If he succeeded in them, he would be in a position to dictate terms at the conference table; if he failed he could pose as the victim and perhaps inspire outside help. The Polish ICC representative stated that Phoumi should be punished for his many violations of the cease-fire, even to the extent of being deprived of some territory.

Brown, supported by Addis, stated that his government was gravely concerned about the Nam Tha situation because it was preventing negotiations. Even if both sides had been provocative in the past, the attack on

Nam Tha was a clear violation of the cease-fire since the town had been in the possession of the RLG on 3 May 1961, when the cease-fire had gone into effect. Military force, said Brown, was the wrong way to bring Phoumi to the conference table; if continued, it would have the opposite effect. The US would not and could not pressure Phoumi to enter into further negotiations so long as he was under military attack. Thus, whether or not negotiations could proceed depended entirely upon Souvanna's willingness to agree to a mutual cease-fire declaration.

When the Soviet diplomat warned that Princes Souvanna and Souphanouvong were losing their patience because of their fruitless meetings with Boun Oum, Ambassador Brown replied that "our patience about continued military pressure and attacks on Nam Tha . . . was beginning to run out also." Abramov responded by quoting Souvanna to the effect that a collapse of negotiations would bring war. The US Ambassador then called the Soviet Ambassador's attention to the efforts made by the US at Geneva to achieve a peaceful solution and stated that he was relying on Abramov to make possible the renewal of negotiations.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1103, 4 Feb 62; 1106, 1107, 1110, 5 Feb 62.

4-18
Feb 62

Thirteen representatives of the Joint Staff and the Services made a field trip to Southeast Asia, visiting South Viet Nam, Thailand, and Laos. Among the party were the Directors of J-4 and J-6, the Deputy Director of the Joint Staff, and Major General J. S. Holtoner, Chairman of the Southeast Asia Study Group and member of the JSSC. (See item 28 March 1962.)

(TS)Chairman, Southeast Asia Study Group, "Report of Field Trip to Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Thailand and Laos), 4-18 February 1962," JMF 9150/5420 (4 Feb 62).

5 Feb 62

[REDACTED] informed [REDACTED] that the Laos Country Team proposal for expansion of resistance forces in north and central Laos (see item 12 January 1962) had been approved. The Country Team was given the authority it had requested to oversee the program, and [REDACTED] was authorized to issue: 1) up to 5,000 Springfield '03 rifles in northern Laos (holding back half of them initially until a later stage), and 2) 2,500 more modern weapons in the Xieng Khouang, Sam Neua, and central Laos area.

5 Feb 62

Phoumi called in Ambassadors Addis and Abramov and delivered to them a long message to the Geneva Co-Chairmen protesting against enemy aggression at Nam Tha and elsewhere. He also said that Boun Oum's original statement on Nam Tha (see item 1 February 1962) had been misunderstood. The RLG had not intended to place any obstacle in the way of Souvanna's proposed visit to Luang Prabang to see the King on 2 February.

There was still no objection to it. Further, Phoumi and Boun Oum were now prepared to consult with Souvanna at Luang Prabang, provided he requested them to do so, or if he met the conditions proposed by Phoumi to the Commission. If such a meeting was to take place, Phoumi would be willing to discuss with Souvanna the pre-conditions necessary to a meeting of the three Princes. He had no objection to such a meeting at Luang Prabang, provided offensive military operations had ended first.

Brown reported that the ICC, accompanied by Ambassadors Addis and Abramov, was to proceed to Khang Khay on 6 February to convey Phoumi's message to Souvanna and obtain his reply. He reported further that Phoumi's declaration that Boun Oum's statement had been "misunderstood" had been inspired by the US Embassy.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1111, 5 Feb 62.

5 Feb 62

After expressing concern over the situation at Nam Tha, Prime Minister Sarit informed Ambassador Young that Phoumi had asked Thailand for bombs for his T-6 aircraft and had also told Sarit that the RLG planned to request assistance from SEATO and the UN. Sarit had agreed that the RLG should appeal to SEATO and the UN but had refused to supply bombs until he had consulted the US. While Thai reluctance to become more deeply involved with Phoumi without US approval was "a very good sign," Young warned nevertheless that the US could not continue relying on Thai self-restraint in a matter so vital to Thai national interests. He requested immediate advice from the State Department.

Later the same day, the Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Young to tell Sarit [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The US also considered an RLG appeal to SEATO useless since there was no evidence of a full-scale Communist offensive that would justify SEATO action; moreover, Phoumi was well aware of US opposition to such an appeal (see item 4 February 1962). An appeal to the UN would likewise be undesirable. The RLG's delaying tactics in the face of international attempts to settle the Lao problem had left it with little support in world opinion.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1130, 5 Feb 62; SecState to Bangkok, 1137, 5 Feb 62.

5 Feb 62

The JCS in a memorandum for the Secretary of Defense replied to a request by the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), dated 8 January, that they comment on a proposed statement of the Department of Defense position regarding military assistance to a Souvanna government. (Noting that the tentative Geneva agreements required that no conditions of a political nature could be attached to any assistance and that no military personnel or civilian advisors, except for a few French military instructors, could be introduced into Laos, and

noting further that during the reconstitution of the Lao forces control of aid distribution would be impossible, ISA had proposed that the Secretary of Defense take the following positions: that the Department of Defense not recommend military aid for a Souvanna coalition government on military or strategic grounds, but that it interpose no objection to limited defense support allocations or limited maintenance-type MAP items if the Department of State considered the political requirement to be overriding.)

The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense that they had no objection to the proposed statement. Considering the possibility that such aid might fall into the hands of a government antagonistic to the United States, they recommended that the question be kept under continuing review in the light of the developing orientation of the Souvanna government.

(S) JCSM-91-62 for SecSef, "Military Aid to Coalition Government in Laos Under Souvanna Phoumi," 5 Feb 62, derived from JCS 2344/31, 29 Jan 62, JMF 9155.2/4060.

5 Feb 62

In a memorandum to the JCS on "Military Courses of Action in Support of United States National Objectives in Laos," the Chief of Naval Operations expressed his view that the JCS should consider the possible contingencies in Southeast Asia in the next two or three years and the military objectives necessary for supporting US policy. The CNO posed ten questions based on potentially adverse situations, any one or a combination of which he considered highly probable, and raised two related problems, all of which he recommended for early consideration by the Joint Staff.

[After first referring the CNO's memorandum to J-5, the JCS on 20 February discussed the memorandum and agreed to refer it to JSSC (General Holtoner's Southeast Asia Study Group) for comment and recommendation. (See item 9 March 1962.)]

(TS) JCS 2344/33, 5 Feb 62, JMF 9155.2/3100 (2 Feb 62).

5 Feb 62

During a conversation with US officials at Geneva, British Co-Chairman MacDonald said he saw Pushkin's continued absence from Geneva as an indication supporting his belief that the Soviets desired to see a Laotian settlement reached through regular diplomatic channels and direct negotiations in Laos itself, without the aggravation of "propaganda-ridden" plenary sessions of the Conference. MacDonald suggested that Pushkin might wish to delay his return to Geneva for as long as possible as a means of preserving "freedom from Chicom nagging and sniping."

In another conversation the following day, the acting head of the French delegation expressed similar views. He believed there was a basic Soviet willingness to cooperate in reaching a Laotian agreement, despite occasional "compulsive" propaganda blasts for

the benefit of the Communist gallery. The French considered, however, that the Russians were hypersensitive to any open reference by Western spokesmen to Soviet willingness to cooperate. Such references only obliged the Soviets to stiffen their attitude in carrying out their duties as Co-Chairman.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1110, 6 Feb 62.

5, 8
Feb 62

As part of US planning for a phased imposition of sanctions upon Phoumi if he continued to resist the formation of a Souvanna government [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] that one planned sanction was the withdrawal of air support from the FAR. Washington agencies presently envisioned that the US would withdraw, under CHMAAG Laos supervision, all Air America assets and personnel--rotary wing aircraft going to Udorn, fixed wing aircraft to Thailand or South Viet Nam. The fixed wing aircraft would be held ready to return to Laos to evacuate the American community or resume support of Phoumi or his successor during renewed large-scale hostilities. [REDACTED] requested that:

1. Air America officials, [REDACTED] the US Ambassador to Laos begin preparing an aircraft evacuation plan and consult on the details of evacuating the American community. [REDACTED]

2. [REDACTED] consult with the respective US Ambassadors to estimate the willingness of Thailand and South Viet Nam to receive the Air America aircraft.

[REDACTED] support of the Meo would continue, regardless of the above sanction or the halting of any other military aid program. The [REDACTED] should therefore incorporate continued air support of the Meo in their planning for withdrawal of air support from the RLG.

On 8 February, [REDACTED] CHMAAG Laos, USARMA Vientiane, and Ambassador Brown informed [REDACTED] that they did not agree entirely with the manner in which the US planned to withdraw aerial support of the FAR. The US representatives in Laos did not think it realistic to plan on abruptly withdrawing aircraft from Laos and then reintroducing them to evacuate the American community. At the time of the plan's execution, Phoumi would have suffered both economic and military sanctions at the hands of the US; the US could not expect such a "chivalrous gesture" as his allowing US aircraft to return and pick up evacuees. The US officials in Laos recommended, as a "far wiser" sequence of actions, that:

1. Prior to a decision to withdraw air support, the US should recall WSMITs and MAAG regional advisers to regional headquarters, since these personnel were dependent upon US air support for food and evacuation.

2. The US should then inform the RLG that, as a result of the suspension of economic and military assistance programs, many US and third-country (Filipino) personnel were no longer required in Laos and would therefore be evacuated. During its course this evacuation would serve as justification for the diversion of all US aircraft from support of the FAR. At the same time, Air America--and Scott Bird & Co., if that firm was willing--would attempt to evacuate inconspicuously as much equipment and as many non-essential personnel as possible.

3. At the completion of these evacuations, but only then, Phoumi would be told that the US was withdrawing its air support of the FAR and that, consequently, the US aircraft would not be returning to Vientiane.

Regarding the continued air support of the Meo, the US officials assumed that it would take the form of night parachute drops, or day drops by unmarked aircraft. Sarit would probably tolerate such an operation originating from Thailand, if it was not on too large a scale and if he was not too angered by the US action against Phoumi. Supporting the Meo by air from South Viet Nam would be most difficult, the US representatives concluded, because of the distance the aerial missions would have to cover.

(S)



5-11
Feb 62

With all the principals and many of the heads of delegations absent from Geneva, the Conference could only mark time and await events in Laos, although the Indian delegation in particular was beginning to urge the Conference to assert its presence and its authority by holding some sort of public meeting. Swezey, the acting head of the US delegation and MacDonald opposed the Indian suggestion, asserting that a public meeting would provide an opportunity for charges and counter-charges, and would also detract from the diplomatic efforts toward a settlement being conducted in Laos. This dissuaded the Indian delegation, but Swezey warned that their proposal would undoubtedly be restated unless concrete signs of progress toward a settlement soon appeared from Vientiane.

The Soviet delegation remained quiescent and there were no indications of Pushkin's returning to Geneva.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1116, 13 Feb 62.

6 Feb 62

A memorandum by the Chairman, JCS, called the attention of the Secretary of Defense to State Department instructions to the Ambassador to Laos, dated 22 December 1961 (see item), in which it was suggested that, in order to

hold the Laotian budget to a minimum following formation of a Souvanna coalition government, FAR troops be placed on half-pay or subsistence until integration and demobilization were completed. The Chairman informed the Secretary of Defense that the JCS were in agreement with the strong objections CINCPAC had entered against this measure, which he felt would "abet a Communist-inspired revolution and make bandits and plunderers out of law-abiding soldiers." The JCS recommended approaching the State Department with a view to having the instruction rescinded and to ensuring that adequate provision be made for the welfare of FAR troops until they were demobilized and absorbed into the civilian economy. (See item 14 February 1962.)

(S) CM-537-62 for SecDef, "Instructions on Economic Aid . . .," 6 Feb 62, reproduced in (S) JCS 2344/34, 8 Feb 62; (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 197037, 26 Jan 62; all in JMF 9155.2/4060 (8 Jan 62).

6 Feb 62 Ambassadors Addis and Abramov and the ICC met with Souvanna at Khang Khay and conveyed to him the contents of Phoumi's message of the previous day (see item 5 February 1962). Souvanna replied that his visit to Luang Prabang was simply awaiting the King's decision. (A letter from Souvanna to the King requesting an audience was delivered during the afternoon by the Chairman of the ICC to a RLG official.) With regard to a cease-fire, Souvanna continued to insist on a signed written agreement. He was prepared to receive Phoumi's representatives at Khang Khay for the purpose of drawing up such an agreement the next day.

Souvanna maintained that Boun Oum should come to Khang Khay and handed a message containing an invitation to such a meeting to the Chairman of the ICC for delivery to Boun Oum.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1116, 1117, 1119, 6 Feb 62.

6 Feb 62 The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that, because efforts to pressure Phoumi into negotiating in good faith no longer seemed promising, the time had come for direct negotiations with Souvanna. The objective of such negotiations, according to Secretary Rusk, would be "to take the initiative away from Phoumi and prevent him from forcing our hand."

Accordingly, the Secretary instructed Ambassador Brown to request British Ambassador Addis to inform Souvanna that, when he had called off his attack on Nam Tha, the US would be prepared to negotiate directly with him on a coalition government acceptable to it. The US, however, could not impose strong sanctions against Phoumi, designed to force the existing RLG to agree to the new government, until Souvanna had provided assurance that he was willing and able to form an acceptable government.

In broad outline, the plan for direct negotiations was as follows:

1. Stop military attacks on Nam Tha, or, if it had fallen, bring about its return to the RLG.

2. Approach Souvanna, through the US, British and French Ambassadors, and indicate that the US was now ready to discuss directly with him the composition of a government of national union. If Souvanna and the US could reach general agreement on the formation of such a government and such other important matters as demobilization and integration of the armed forces of the Lao factions, the US would then be prepared to support him. To be satisfactory to the US the cabinet should include nine strong, capable, and experienced Vientiane personalities, including four representing the Phoumi-Boun Oum faction.

3. Arrange for the ICC to invite the Geneva Conference Co-Chairmen to Laos, if Souvanna's cabinet proposals proved acceptable to the US. The Co-Chairmen would add weight to US support of Souvanna and would keep the military situation under control.

4. Presentation by Souvanna of his proposed government to the King. The three Ambassadors and the Co-Chairmen would follow up, informing the King that they were prepared to support Souvanna's proposed government and saw no acceptable alternative to it.

(See item 7 February 1962.)

(S) Msgs, Sec State to Vientiane, 703, 704, 6 Feb 62.

7 Feb 62

Phoumi informed Ambassador Addis that his position was still that there could be no substantive political discussions with Souvanna and Souphanouvong so long as military pressures continued, particularly at Nam Tha. If military pressures were lifted, however, Phoumi and Boun Oum would be willing to attend meetings at the Plaine des Jarres or elsewhere.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1121, 7 Feb 62.

7 Feb 62

The Secretary of State approved Ambassador Brown's recommendation that there be a delay of about 48 hours in the approach to Souvanna by British Ambassador Addis, carrying the US proposal for direct negotiations with Souvanna on the formation of a government (see item 6 February 1962). Brown had recommended this because he saw both hope of favorable development in the current negotiations for a cease-fire and danger in what might be a too precipitate injection of the idea of direct negotiations with Souvanna by the three Western Ambassadors. He feared that making the approach without a "new peg to hand it on" might convince the Pathet Lao and the Soviets that their military pressure, chiefly at Nam Tha, had been successful in bringing the US more actively to the support of Souvanna. The approach might better be made, Brown said, only upon some renewed evidence of Phoumi-Boun Oum obduracy. If

progress were made during the next two days in the negotiations for a cease-fire and toward a meeting of the three Princes, the approach would be unnecessary.

Brown offered further reasons for caution. Once the US message was given to Souvanna, "we will be very much in his hands in our negotiations with him"; the United States would ultimately have either to accept the best government composition offered by Souvanna and Souphanouvong or to withdraw entirely from Laos. US ties with the RLG would largely be broken by turning to Souvanna. Phoumi and other representatives of the RLG and the Vientiane neutrals, who the US had hoped would form a strong right wing in the coalition government, might be unwilling to serve in a government that they would feel had been negotiated by foreigners. King Savang would almost certainly see the US re-orientation toward Souvanna as an affront. The RLG, at Phoumi's instigation, might restrict the Western diplomats to Vientiane or declare some of them persona non grata, in which case the negotiations with Souvanna would have to take place outside the country, perhaps in Phnom Penh. Brown could not see how the proposed US course would achieve its stated objective of taking the initiative away from Phoumi and preventing him from "forcing our hand." The US ability to hold Phoumi to observance of the cease-fire or prevent him from launching attacks in desperation or withdrawing to southern Laos would be considerably lessened. With the hope of preventing these violent reactions, Ambassador Brown recommended that he be authorized to tell Phoumi, as tactfully as possible, of the planned US approach to Souvanna. Brown said he assumed no further sanctions would be applied against the RLG for the time being. He asked the status of the February cash deposit and whether it was still intended that strong sanctions would not be applied against Phoumi and the FAR until assurances had been received from the Soviets that they would restrain the Pathet Lao (see items 7 and 27 January 1962).

In reply, the Secretary of State authorized the 48-hour delay but reaffirmed the intention of going ahead with the project of informing Souvanna that, subject to cessation of the attack on Nam Tha, the United States was prepared to initiate discussions with him directly on the formulation of a coalition government the US could accept. The Secretary said that the US Government was not prepared to accept the risk that Phoumi and Boun Oum would again frustrate the negotiations at a critical stage, for they would be difficult to start again after another failure. The US would continue to withhold the February cash deposit pending further developments. The purpose of bringing the Geneva Co-Chairmen to Laos would be to keep the military situation under control during a difficult period during which the United States would be taking action, possibly including withdrawal of military support from the FAR, to bring a Souvanna government into power. The presence of the Co-Chairmen, the Secretary said, might prove an alternative

to obtaining the Soviet assurances Brown had asked about. Finally, the Secretary approved Brown's suggestion that Phoumi be told of the US undertakings with Souvanna.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1123, 7 Feb 62; SecState to Vientiane, 709, 7 Feb 62.

7 Feb 62

From London, Ambassador Bruce reported the British Foreign Office view that the Pathet Lao attack on Nam Tha was a reaction to previous FAR moves against Muong Sai and the subsequent retreat of Phoumi's troops, which had made Nam Tha an inviting target. The Foreign Office considered that the Pathet Lao thus far showed restraint in not capturing Nam Tha. The Ambassador noted particularly that the British assessed Phoumi's moves as an attempt to provoke a situation that would involve the SEATO powers militarily in Laos.

In a reply on 9 February, Assistant Secretary Harriman hoped that the Ambassador "could get across to FonOff we do not agree [with] British assessment that blatant PL/VN attack on Nam Tha was merely predictable reaction to previous FAR moves against Muong Sai." The FAR had been engaged only in normal clearing operations in territory not held by either side at the time of the May cease-fire, "and we stopped attack on Muong Sai." In contrast, the PL drive toward Nam Tha carried them into territory definitely held by the FAR and was an open, inexcusable cease-fire violation. If the Pathet Lao-Viet Minh had chosen force as the means to induce Phoumi to negotiate, in Harriman's view "this psychology [was] completely wrong." No doubt the enemy could take Nam Tha, but such action would gravely prejudice the chance for peaceful settlement. Harriman suggested that the Chinese Communists might also be behind the move to capture or at least dominate the Nam Tha airfield, owing to its proximity to their border. In the meanwhile, the United States was continuing to do all it could to prevent Phoumi from taking provocative actions.

(S) Msgs, London to SecState, 2916, 7 Feb 62; SecState to London, 4236, 9 Feb 62.

7 Feb 62

The Secretary General of SEATO warned the SEATO representatives in Bangkok to prepare for an RLG appeal for assistance. Privately he gave his view that a SEATO refusal to respond favorably to another Lao appeal would be a mortal blow to the organization. The US, UK, and French representatives asserted, however, that a Lao appeal would be "untimely" owing to the existence of the ICC and Geneva Co-Chairmen machinery to handle the situation.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1163, 9 Feb 62.

8 Feb 62

The Government of France, in commenting upon the US decision to deal directly with Souvanna if the attack against Nam Tha were halted (see item 6 February 1962), expressed general agreement with the US decision along with qualified optimism regarding its chances of success. The French, however, were not satisfied with certain aspects of the plan. The major reservations,

as stated by M. Manac'h of the French Foreign Office to an officer of the American Embassy in Paris, concerned: 1) the lack of consultation between the US and France prior to the American approval of an approach to Souvanna by the British Ambassador to Laos; 2) the "difficulties of stopping short of outright intervention"; and 3) doubt of the wisdom of involving the Co-Chairmen, arising both from preference for a strictly tripartite (US-UK-French) handling of the matter and from fear that the Soviets would find means of "clouding the prospects" once the Co-Chairmen were involved.

Specifically, the French Government hoped for a fully coordinated tripartite effort and had so instructed Alphand, the French Ambassador to the US. Since the US, at Ambassador Brown's request (see item 7 February 1962), had postponed Addis's visit to Khang Khay, there would be ample time for the desired coordination. The proposed invitation to the Co-Chairmen, Manac'h suggested, should be delayed as long as possible. King Savang, after all, had shown antipathy toward both the Co-Chairmen and the ICC, which would issue the invitation. Furthermore, involvement of the Co-Chairmen would "give the Russians double innings, as leader of the bloc and as co-chairman."

Manac'h also stated that the French hope of avoiding a written cease-fire agreement might be realized. The French had in this manner sought to avoid enhancing the prestige of the Pathet Lao at a time when unification of the armies was imminent.

Regarding Nam Tha, the French did not seem concerned. Manac'h looked upon the incident as a Pathet Lao response to RLG aggression, presumably at Mahaxay. Moreover, few of Kong Le's troops were believed involved, and Souvanna himself had given assurance that Nam Tha would not be taken.

When an officer of the American Embassy mentioned, in general, the latest estimate of Viet Minh strength in Laos (as many as 10,000; see items 26 and 31 January 1962), Manac'h was extremely surprised. The French diplomat wondered if the figures were not unrealistic, since they were not confirmed by French sources. Manac'h believed that the US Country Team might have included certain "minority and border elements" and stated that he would request the opinion of French military sources in Laos.

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3780, 8 Feb 62; (C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3796, 8 Feb 62.

8 Feb 62

Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that Falaize had received no instructions from the French Government regarding the tripartite approach to Souvanna and that Addis had not yet been authorized by London to join the proposed negotiations (see items 6, 7, and 9 February 1962).

Brown also stated that on the previous day Abramov had repeated to Addis an assurance by Souphanouvong that Nam Tha would not be taken. Addis, on the basis of his recent conversations with Souvanna, had advised the British Foreign Office that the Prince was highly suspicious of the US and might regard the offer to deal with him directly as simply an attempt to relieve the military pressure on Nam Tha.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1125, 8 Feb 62.

9 Feb 62

Phoumi, in a long discussion with Hasey, said that a government of national union under Souvanna was not possible because it could not, in any form, be acceptable to all Lao parties. The RLG would not agree, in any case, to control by Souvanna of the Defense and Interior Ministries. He was confident that the King would not agree to a Souvanna Government if the RLG disapproved it.

Phoumi said that the ideal solution would be for the King to be voted special powers by the National Congress, authorizing him to run the government by six councils as follows: defense, Souvanna; administration, Boun Oum; economic affairs and finance, Souphanouvong; foreign affairs, Phoui Sananikone; culture, Nhouy Abhay; and social affairs, Outhong Souvannavong. Each head of council would be able to appoint as many council members as he wished, subject to approval by the King. A second possibility would be a recognized but not formally agreed partition of Laos based generally on the present positions of the two sides. A third solution would be a North-South partition.

Phoumi favored the King-and-six-councils solution but believed de facto partition to be more feasible. North-South partition was opposed by the King, and for this reason Phoumi was not currently moving to set up a southern bastion.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1141, 9 Feb 62.

9 Feb 62

Souvanna replied to the message by which Ambassador Addis had forwarded Phoumi's position of 7 February (see item). In his reply, Souvanna said that the ICC and Ambassadors Addis and Abramov should urge Phoumi and Boun Oum to go to the Plaine des Jarres to arrange for immediate establishment of a coalition government in accordance with the Zurich, Hin Heup, and Geneva agreements. Rejecting Phoumi's demand that military pressures must first be lifted, Souvanna called for the meeting to be scheduled without prior conditions. Military delegations could meet at the same time to negotiate on cease-fire problems.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1145, 10 Feb 62.

9 Feb 62

Secretary Rusk informed Ambassador Brown that the Department of State had discussed with the French and British Embassies at Washington the instructions that France and the UK were about to give to their Ambassadors at Vientiane regarding the proposed tri-partite approach to Souvanna (see items 6 and 7

February 1962). The Secretary of State believed that, though both the Allies would instruct their Ambassadors to take part in the approach, neither France nor Britain would permit their diplomatic representatives to engage in what the Governments regarded as "cabinet making."

The British indicated that Addis was being instructed to consult with Brown and Falaize concerning questions of timing and, if the other Ambassadors agreed, to make the initial approach to Souvanna. During this first conversation, Addis was to explore the general ways in which Souvanna could earn US support. The British Ambassador would stress that, since the US would back Souvanna if his proposed cabinet seemed reasonable, the Prince should submit his ideas in advance so that the US could study them and offer comment. In subsequent talks, Addis would support the efforts of the US to obtain the type of balanced government that it desired.

The French Embassy undertook to request the Foreign Office in Paris to instruct Ambassador Falaize to participate in joint talks with Souvanna.

Both the British and French, however, expressed reservations about entering into detailed discussions with Souvanna regarding the "personalities" in his cabinet. Secretary Rusk therefore explained that, although personalities need not be discussed initially, it eventually would be necessary to "talk frankly with Souvanna about at least some individuals for sensitive posts," if the goal of a balanced cabinet with at least nine strong and capable members from Vientiane was to be realized. The extent and timing of these discussions of individuals would depend on Souvanna's reaction to the initial approach, Phoumi's attitude, and developments among the Princes themselves. The main thing, according to Secretary Rusk, was that the Western Ambassadors were free to use their judgment in selecting the best means to insure a successful approach to Souvanna.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 721, 9 Feb 62.

9 Feb 62

Ambassador Young observed to the Secretary of State that the alert to move certain Thai Army units to northeast Thailand was a result of the serious Thai concern over recent Communist action in the Nam Tha area. Although the troops had been alerted, US observers considered it highly unlikely that they would be moved unless the situation seriously deteriorated, since the practical consideration of per diem payment would make the Thai Government reluctant. (See item 13 February 1962.)

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1163, 9 Feb 62.

10 Feb 62

In a message to Souvanna, Boun Oum rejected his invitation to come to Khang Khay for talks on the formation of a government of national union (see item 8 February 1962), saying that such talks could not be productive in the current atmosphere of armed hostilities. Boun Oum called on Souvanna to "order

the Vietminh troops to leave the National Territory" and refrain from further attacks, and he urged Souvanna to send military representatives to Ban Hin Heup to discuss a cease-fire. Only after these measures had been fully applied would Boun Oum be prepared to enter into negotiations.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1150, 10 Feb 62.

10 Feb 62

Ambassador Brown reported that Phoumi had informed MAAG that he intended to reinforce Nam Tha with a paratroop battalion drawn from Seno, to enable his forces to push the enemy from high ground adjacent to the town. Phoumi had asked MAAG for support with C-46 aircraft to drop the battalion. It continued to be the judgment of MAAG and the Ambassador that, in addition to the political undesirability of such action, reinforcement of Nam Tha would only send more FAR troops into a trap and would be countered by further enemy reinforcements. Accordingly Phoumi's request was being denied and CHMAAG's previous advice regarding the military inadvisability of reinforcing Nam Tha was being reiterated to Phoumi. Later in the day Brown reported that the RLG response to the US refusal and advice had been a statement that reinforcement of Nam Tha would proceed with resources available to the FAR. Still later in the day, with the continued concurrence of MAAG, the Ambassador refused a further request for US assistance in air-lifting a battalion, destined for Nam Tha, from Vientiane to Luang Prabang.

The State Department informed Ambassador Brown that Phoumi's unwillingness to follow US advice on military matters was causing serious concern. It was feared that reinforcement combined with aggressive patrolling and T-6 strikes might force or give excuse for a reversal of the apparent decision by the other side not to take Nam Tha for the time being.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1146, 10 Feb 62, received in JCS as DA IN 201505; (S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1149, 1151, 10 Feb 62; SecState to Vientiane, 726, 10 Feb 62.

10 Feb 62

Ambassador Young reported to the Secretary of State that Thailand's dissatisfaction with SEATO ran deep, pervaded all levels of Thai political and military leadership, and particularly infected Foreign Minister Thanat. The Ambassador outlined the sources of the Thai conviction that SEATO was a "failure": the deteriorating situation in Laos and the Thai doubts, heightened by the Lao situation, that SEATO could not insure Thai security if certain members (i.e., European) vetoed or obstructed US actions. Moreover, SEATO was now viewed in some quarters as an obstacle to closer regional associations and to greater flexibility in Thai foreign policy.

The Ambassador believed it essential that the US fight this ill-considered undermining of SEATO until a US-Thai reevaluation of SEATO might take place. To buy time for this purpose, several immediate measures should be taken. The Ambassador submitted a draft

message that he recommended the Secretary of State, in his capacity as US SEATO council member, send to the Thai Government; he also suggested that CINCPAC, as US SEATO military adviser, send a similar message to his Thai counterpart.

If Thailand had not, in fact, already decided to abandon SEATO, the Ambassador added, willingness to stay would be contingent on US promises to overhaul the organization in the near future. If, on the other hand, the Thai intended to destroy SEATO (the Ambassador assumed that SEATO without Thailand was useless to the US), the US must prevail on them to cooperate in an orderly transition so as to minimize the blow to US prestige such a break-up would engender.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1167, 1168, 10 Feb 62.

11 Feb 62

CHMAAG Laos relayed to the JCS without comment a report from FAR sources that T-6 aircraft on a strike 25 miles east of Nam Tha on 8 February had fired on two IL-14 aircraft that were dropping supplies to the enemy. One of the IL-14's was believed to have been hit.

No enemy shelling of the town and Nam Tha airfield was reported, although there had been sporadic mortar fire for several days past. Patrols of both sides were active. The tactical situation remained unchanged.

The FAR resumed the reinforcement of Nam Tha by airdropping the leading elements of the 1st Parachute Battalion.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 201752, 11 Feb 62; DA IN 201944, 12 Feb 62; (TS-NOFORN) J-3, Southeast Asia Sitrep 8-62, 23 Feb 62.

12 Feb 62

Ambassador Addis, in an interview with Souvanna at Khang Khay, made known the US intention of working directly with Souvanna for the formation of a government of national union, as set forth in the Department of State instructions of 6 February (see item), and also delivered a personal message from Assistant Secretary Harriman covering the same points in general terms. Souvanna accepted these messages as "very encouraging." In the opinion of Addis, he appeared to accept readily that the US must approve a final cabinet slate before it was presented and that it would be impossible to begin negotiations while Nam Tha was under attack.

Souvanna had said earlier, in the presence of Souphanouvong and Abramov, that he was prepared to make a declaration that he was simply defending himself against RLG attack at Nam Tha, but for him to order an end to the firing on the airfield there would be quite another matter, since the firing was designed to prevent the landing of reinforcements.

When Addis suggested that a local truce under ICC supervision would give assurance against reinforcement, Souphanouvong rejected the idea. Later Souphanouvong said flatly that he would continue the military pressure on Nam Tha "for political reasons."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1155, 12 Feb 62; SecState to Vientiane, 722, 9 Feb 62

12 Feb 62

A joint State-Defense-Aid Circular message informed US diplomatic posts in underdeveloped countries, and others, that the President desired the US to take advantage of every opportunity for using the indigenous military forces of underdeveloped countries for civic action programs--"projects useful to the populace at all levels in such fields as training, public works, agriculture, transportation, communications, health, sanitation, and others." The US Government had developed a pattern of responsibility for such efforts. Military assistance missions would program and fund projects that increased the civic action capability of military or paramilitary forces under their supervision; AID missions would program and fund the necessary materials and local labor costs for specific development projects, as well as requirements to increase the civic action capabilities of paramilitary units under their supervision (e.g., police forces). All US agencies would at the same time encourage the host governments to use their own resources in such programs. The various diplomatic posts were requested to reexamine the capabilities of local military forces for civic action programs and recommend the shape of US support for any feasible programs thereby discovered. (See item 23 February 1962 for the recommendation of the Laos Country Team.)

(S) Msg, AIDTO CIRC, X-189, 12 Feb 62 (filed in JCS Msg Center as DA IN 201890).

12 Feb 62

As instructed (see item 4 February 1962), Ambassador Young set forth for Prime Minister Sarit and Foreign Minister Thanat an assessment of SEATO's role in SEA security plans and a further assurance of US support for Thailand. Sarit's reaction was blunt: he knew and appreciated the President's concern and interest, but he did not want assistance and support for Thailand through SEATO unless it was changed. "Things we have asked to be changed in SEATO must be changed or we will leave SEATO or at least not attend meetings I think it would be better to be out of SEATO like Viet Nam and just get assistance from the US. I don't like the action required by the treaty. We cannot lie to the Thai people any more and say SEATO will help Thailand because SEATO is unable to."

Foreign Minister Thanat also interjected his own anti-SEATO views into the conversation. He posed two questions to the US Ambassador: 1) did the US position on SEATO mean that the US opposed any changes in SEATO; and 2) were not these US assurances necessary only because there were certain actions that the US could not take through SEATO because of the veto? In its present state, Thanat charged, SEATO was unnecessary

and obstructive. Despite the Ambassador's repeated assurances to the contrary, Thanat refused to retreat from this position. This conversation proved, Ambassador Young observed, how very low SEATO had sunk in the estimation of the Thai Government and how urgently US action was needed to repair this deterioration.

Ambassador Young also sought to clarify the status of SEATO Tactical Air Exercise AIR COBRA, which Sarit had indicated should have been referred to him for approval as a political matter and which the Thai Air Force opposed. When Young reviewed the record of SEATO approval during 1961 of the scheduling of the exercise, Sarit and Thanat denied knowledge of it. In any event, they now refused Thai participation in AIR COBRA if it was to be under SEATO auspices. Thailand would participate, however, if it was carried out as a bilateral US-Thai exercise. The Thai Air Force believed the exercise would be useless under SEATO, Sarit explained, and such agreement as had been given was on the understanding that it would be a joint Thai-US project. (See items 16 and 22 March 1962.)
(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1177, 12 Feb 62.

12-18
Feb 62

There was little to report from the Geneva Conference, which remained inactive. Speculation continued regarding Pushkin's return to Geneva, with MacDonald observing that this was unlikely before the end of February, if then, since he believed the Soviets intended to wait until some pattern emerged from the Vientiane talks. He felt that Soviet irritation over the lack of progress in Laos had begun to stimulate doubts of US sincerity in seeking a mutually agreeable settlement. News of US action in withholding both the February financial payment to the RLG and logistical support for the FAR forces at Nam Tha had been reassuring, however, and may have influenced Pushkin's evident postponement of his return to Geneva.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1120, 21 Feb 62.

13 Feb 62

King Savang granted Souvanna's request for an audience (see item 6 February 1962) on a date to be determined. (This was later set as 16 February; see item.)
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1161, 13 Feb 62.

13 Feb 62

In response to an appeal by Boun Oum (see item 10 February 1962) for a renewed cease-fire, Souvanna claimed that the outbreak of hostilities had been provoked by the RLG and declared that Boun Oum alone could "put an end to these attacks and this harassment to which our troops must reply in self-defense." Souvanna, after observing that it was the responsibility of the Geneva Conference to order the withdrawal of foreign troops from Laos, denied that he had any foreign troops under his control. In conclusion, Souvanna called for an immediate meeting of the Princes on the Plaine des Jarres to form a national coalition and thus settle the entire Lao problem.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1160, 13 Feb 62.

13 Feb 62

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that, although military pressure was being maintained against Nam Tha, he expected the British and French Ambassadors to urge him within a few days to enter into negotiations with Souvanna during that Prince's visit to Luang Prabang. Since his instructions specified that he should not negotiate with Souvanna until operations against Nam Tha had been halted, the US Ambassador now inquired how the Secretary of State wished him to react to probable British and French arguments that this opportunity to confer with Souvanna might represent the last chance for a political settlement.

The Secretary of State replied that, although improvement in the situation at Nam Tha seemed unlikely, Ambassador Brown should nevertheless carry on discussions with Souvanna along the lines previously set forth (see item 6 February 1962).

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1156, 13 Feb 62; SecState to Vientiane, 730, 13 Feb 62.

13 Feb 62

The Thai Government announced that as a result of increased Communist military activity in the Nam Tha area, Thai Army units had been dispatched to "certain strategic points" along the Lao border. Thailand termed the Communist activity near Nam Tha a violation of the Lao cease-fire agreement and a possible danger to Thailand.

The Thai press commented that this movement of Thai forces into the border area was the first since the Franco-Thai War of 1940-1941. Until now the frontier had been guarded by a small and lightly armed border patrol; the Thai Army had remained outside the area pursuant to an agreement with the French which, although actually expired, was still honored by the Thai Government.

(U) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1189, 14 Feb 62.

13 Feb 62

During a conversation with US Embassy representatives in London, two officials of the Foreign Office sketched their "tentative" and "uncleared" thoughts regarding the current Thai attitude toward SEATO. The two British officials said that if the Thai leaders were sincerely obsessed with fear for the security of their country, the US and UK should seek means of reassuring them. The primary means of doing this might be to emphasize that Thailand's position under SEATO could not properly be compared to that of Laos. While Laos was a SEATO "designated area," Thailand was a signatory member of the pact and was indeed the only member country on the mainland of Asia. SEATO was in fact designed to protect Thailand, and the SEATO nations, including the UK, could be expected to come to that country's defense in case of Communist aggression. Various measures might be adopted to underscore the US-UK determination in this matter, such as "drawing up realistic and adequate plans" for the defense of Thailand, prepositioning troops in

the country if Sarit wanted them there, stockpiling military supplies in Thailand, and providing assistance in the antisubversion field. At the same time, the Thai Government should be advised that changing the voting procedure within SEATO would really alter nothing in a way helpful to Thai security. In any event, the British felt strongly that it would be unacceptable to have SEATO voting operate differently from NATO and CENTO voting. (See item 20 February 1962.)

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 3017, 14 Feb 62.

14 Feb 62

The Joint Chiefs of Staff responded to memoranda from the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), 5 December 1961 (see item), and the Acting Secretary of Defense, 26 December (see item), requesting recommendations on the withdrawal of US military personnel from Laos when required by the conclusion of an international agreement. The JCS called attention to the views expressed on the situation in Laos in their memorandum of 5 January 1962 (see item), and added that withdrawal of US military personnel and equipment from the existing Royal Lao Government, prior to the verified withdrawal of the parallel Communist assistance to the enemy, could have a far-reaching impact on the future of Southeast Asia. Hence the JCS had "serious reservations regarding the premature withdrawal of US military assistance from the RLG." With this point in mind, they considered that:

1. Assuming no unforeseen protocol requirements hinder the movement, the overt physical withdrawal of personnel and US-owned operational equipment could be accomplished administratively without great difficulty. It should be conducted in a routine manner and with a minimum of publicity.
2. "Practical complications" did not favor adoption of the suggestion of the Acting Secretary of Defense that MAAG personnel be organized into a provisional tactical unit and evacuate by stages across Laos to South Viet Nam. During the relatively short time that would be available, most US military personnel would be fully occupied in effecting an orderly close-out of facilities and evacuation of equipment, and in any event it was desirable for them to remain with the FAR as long as practicable.
3. Individual personnel should be attached to JUSMAG Thailand as required in order to conduct residual activities of MAAG Laos.
4. To maintain the maximum operational capability of the FAR until the Lao Army was reconstituted, all MAP equipment should remain initially with the FAR, but all US-owned operational equipment should in general be withdrawn with the departure of US military personnel.
5. Some items of US-owned equipment should, upon recommendation by CINCPAC, be transferred to MAP to permit retention by the FAR during the transition period.

6. Political arrangements should be made to recapture MAP equipment in excess of Lao requirements when the FAR forces were reconstituted, and every effort should be made to prevent it from falling into Communist hands.

7. The US should retain control of the 30-day reserve stocks of ammunition, ordnance, and other supplies for the FAR stored in Thailand (SALT SHAKER) and should maintain them until it was determined that they would not be needed in Laos.

By a message of the same date, the JCS provided CINCPAC with guidance along the foregoing lines, and with the additional information that the MAAG withdrawal should be planned to take place within from 32 to 75 days of an international agreement establishing a neutral Laos. The JCS requested CINCPAC's plan and recommendations as soon as practicable (see item 2 March 1962).

(S) JCSM-110-62 for SecDef, "Withdrawal of US Military Personnel from Laos," 14 Feb 62, derived from (S) JCS 2344/32, 5 Feb 62; (S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 3289, 14 Feb 62; all in JMF 9155.2/3100 (5 Dec 61).

14 Feb 62

The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) informed the Chairman, JCS, that the concern he had expressed on 6 February (see item) regarding half-pay for FAR troops had been made known to the State Department. The State Department recognized the necessity of providing for the welfare of FAR troops and had made the half-pay proposal in the belief that even on this basis the annual income of the Lao soldier would be well above the country average. However, the State Department was willing to consider other arrangements and was awaiting comments from the Ambassador and Country Team on the draft instructions. The State Department had assured ISA that before final instructions on relations with a Souvanna government were issued they would be coordinated with the DOD as far as military matters were concerned and that additional comments would be welcome at that time.

(S) JCS 2344/35, 16 Feb 62.

15 Feb 62

The US Army Attache in Vientiane reported to ACSI that FAR officers had stopped attending his Thursday night movies, had become aloof at social functions, had ceased to visit his office voluntarily, and were no longer asking to accompany him on trips in attache aircraft. Further, he was now required to go through channels to visit the Ministry of Security, and often experienced delay. The Army Attache believed this growing coolness and deterioration of relations to be a reaction to US policy. The tendencies had appeared after the Princes' conference in December and had become pronounced after the delay in releasing January aid funds. They were more noticeable in Vientiane than in the field. MAAG personnel, according to the

Attache, were encountering a similar, although less developed, situation and were finding FAR officers less responsive to advice.

(S) Msg, USARMA Vientiane to ACSI, DA IN 203829, 15 Feb 62.

16 Feb 62 Souvanna arrived in Luang Prabang for his scheduled audience with King Savang. Also gathered at the Royal capital for possible consultations were General Phoumi, the three ICC Commissioners, and the US, British, French, Soviet, and Australian Ambassadors. Princes Boun Oum and Souphanouvong were not in attendance.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1170, 16 Feb 62;

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1201, 22 Feb 62.

16 Feb 62 An appraisal of Communist objectives, capabilities and intentions in Southeast Asia was prepared by the Defense Intelligence Agency in collaboration with the intelligence organizations of the military services and was delivered to the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, JCS, for their use on a trip to Hawaii.

According to the appraisal, the Communists apparently viewed South Viet Nam and Thailand as the primary targets for their long-range objective of removing all vestiges of US influence and presence in the area and of establishing national regimes under Communist hegemony. In the short-run, Laos was important to the Communists as a means of applying military pressure on Thailand and of infiltrating and subverting South Viet Nam.

It was not believed that the Communists had a firm timetable for achieving their objective. With respect to Laos, their minimum short-term objectives had been generally satisfied at the time of the cease-fire in May 1961. The disorganization and disheartened state of the Lao Army permitted off-road movement by Communists to go virtually unchallenged even in localities nominally under government control. The Communists probably would not overtly or covertly commit themselves militarily in Laos so long as there appeared a reasonable chance of gaining an international agreement neutralizing the country as a potential base of Free World operations against North Viet Nam while they continued to use it as a base of Communist operations against South Viet Nam. It was not believed that the Chinese Communists, in spite of their capability to do so at any time, would commit overt military aggression in Laos, nor was it expected that the North Vietnamese would commit large-scale overt aggression with readily identifiable combat units except in response to a Western intervention that appeared to them to threaten North Viet Nam.

It was estimated that antigovernment forces totalled about 38,000, comprising approximately 6,000 Kong Le, 4,000 Kham Ouane, 19,000 Pathet Lao, and 9,000 North Vietnamese, the latter having a minimum of 10 infantry battalions plus supporting engineers,

artillery, AA artillery and armor. According to the DIA appraisal, the combat effectiveness of the Pathet Lao, Kong Le and Kham Ouane forces was considerably less than that of the North Vietnamese units and perhaps generally less than that of the average FAR forces. The decisive factor in Communist military successes had been the use of North Vietnamese troops in critical tactical situations. Although outnumbered by the FAR, the antigovernment forces now had a superiority in artillery and armor. Without further external reinforcement, they could maintain their main forward positions, conduct local operations to counter aggressive actions by government troops, and, by concentrating forces, seize and hold certain key positions from the FAR. If reinforced with additional North Vietnamese combat units, the enemy could quickly overrun all of Laos.

Three general courses of action were open to the Communists: 1) to maintain the status quo by restricting their activity to minor actions designed to maintain their LOC and to develop control in the rear areas; 2) to undertake limited local attacks and counterattacks designed to maintain or improve their front-line positions and to disrupt FAR efforts to encroach on Communist-held areas; 3) to open a major offensive designed to overrun the remainder of Laos. In conjunction with any one of these courses, the Communists could intensify guerrilla activities in government-held areas.

It was believed that the Communists would continue along. Although reasonably satisfied with the status quo, the Communists had reinforced their troops with additional North Vietnamese combat units and staged local counter attacks in recent weeks. The DIA did not see in the pattern any indication of a Communist effort to develop a general offensive.

(For further development of the above appraisal, as SNIE 10-62, see item 21 February 1962.)

(S) DIA Estimate, "Appraisal of Communist Objectives, Capabilities and Intentions in Southeast Asia," 16 Feb 62; (S) Memo, Dir DIA, for Dir JS, "Estimate of Communist Objectives in Southeast Asia (C)," 21 Feb 62; both in JMF 9150/2200 (16 Feb 62).

16 Feb 62

In Washington, British Ambassador Ormsby Gore conferred with Harriman to discuss the proposed Foreign Office instructions to MacDonald for the latter's anticipated meeting with Pushkin on the 19th (in actuality this meeting did not occur, since Pushkin did not return to Geneva). Anticipating that Pushkin would ascribe responsibility for the deadlock in Laos to the RLG and also to the United States, MacDonald was instructed to avoid arguments over responsibility and blame. Instead, he was to propose that the Communists cease limiting the operations of the ICC and to state that Lord Home felt that the Co-Chairmen should utilize

their position to go to Laos in 7-10 days, there "to advise and assist in reaching final settlement." He was also to state that Home had suggested to Harriman, who had accepted, that the latter personally go to Laos to intensify the pressures leading to a settlement.

Harriman agreed to these instructions, subject to certain minor revisions of timing; these the British accepted.

(S) Msg, SecState to Geneva, FECON 766, 16 Feb 62.

17 Feb 62

In an audience granted to Ambassador Brown, King Savang said that he had urged both Phoumi and Souvanna to negotiate at length and in good faith. On the question of the allocation of the Defense and Interior Ministries, however, the King refused to commit himself, although Brown reverted to this point several times. In response to a question from Brown, the King said that Phoumi had presented his proposal for a government of six councils headed by the King (see items 25 January and 9 February 1962); the King had rejected it. He was emphatically opposed to this scheme, which he termed unconstitutional, and to any of the other proposed solutions that would involve the King in active direction of the government, except in an emergency precipitated by civil war and invasion.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1178, 18 Feb 62.

17 Feb 62

At a meeting with Souvanna in Luang Prabang, Phoumi refused to agree to control of the Defense and Interior Ministries by neutralists in a coalition government. It was agreed, however, that Souvanna would come to Vientiane for further talks (see item 22 February 1962).

At a later meeting between Souvanna and the US, British, French, and Australian Ambassadors, Ambassador Brown told Souvanna that the US desired a government that included Phoumi, who could be of "very great help" to Souvanna. Souvanna agreed. The US would continue its efforts in this direction but, as Phoumi probably would not yield on the question of the Defense and Interior Ministries, it would be necessary, if the US was to be fully effective in its support, for Souvanna to produce a cabinet slate the United States could endorse. Souvanna agreed to deliver such a list on his arrival in Vientiane.

During his meeting with the Ambassadors, Souvanna denied that his residing in Khang Khay indicated any alliance with the Pathet Lao. On the other hand, as he had previously told Phoumi, he could not unite with Phoumi against the Pathet Lao because such an act would clearly divide the country. Souvanna said that whereas he exercised control in regions where his troops were predominant or even present, he had no control whatsoever over areas where the Pathet Lao were alone. Since there were no Souvanna troops at Nam Tha,

the Pathet Lao controlled the situation completely. Souvanna said that Soviet Ambassador Abramov, at his urging, had tried to persuade Souphanouvong to restrain the Pathet Lao troops around Nam Tha. The most that Abramov could obtain was Souphanouvong's promise "to think it over." In short, Souvanna seemed thoroughly aware of the necessity of avoiding hostilities at Nam Tha during negotiations, but he also was, "admittedly and clearly, wholly dependent on Souphanouvong as to what in fact happens."

In addition to attempting to clarify his relationship with the Pathet Lao, Souvanna expressed his appreciation of the approach made to him on behalf of the Western Allies and offered suggestions regarding the manner in which the US should exert pressure on Phoumi. Souvanna urged that US financial support not be withheld in a manner that would prevent the FAR from being paid, since he did not want to risk defections and disloyalty in the army. Preferably, US pressure should consist of withholding military supplies and withdrawing military advisers.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1176, 1182, 19 Feb 62.

17 Feb 62 After two relatively quiet days, the enemy shelled Nam Tha with six rounds of 120-mm. mortar fire, causing considerable damage.

The FAR forces had been further reinforced on 11-12-13 February, when two companies of the 1st Parachute Battalion were dropped in the area. During this time and again on 14 February, patrol activity on both sides had resulted in several small actions, while the airfield and FAR positions were subjected to sporadic shelling.

Elsewhere in Laos, the pattern of patrol engagements, ambushes and exchanges of mortar fire was being duplicated.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 202210, 13 Feb 62; DA IN 202523, 14 Feb 62; DA IN 203135, 15 Feb 62; DA IN 203807, 16 Feb 62; DA IN 203897, 17 Feb 62; DA IN 204041, 19 Feb 62.

17 Feb 62 CINCPAC requested that CHMAAG Laos ~~report on the feasibility and possible means of harassing Viet Minh troops moving through the Mu Gia and Nape passes connecting central Laos and North Viet Nam.~~

CINCPAC desired specific comments upon: 1) the human "assets," whether Meo, Kha, or "other," that could be gathered for such an operation; 2) the amount of external assistance that the operation would require; 3) the extent to which the operation could be supported by helicopter or helio-courier; and 4) the probable effectiveness of the operation in relieving Viet Minh pressures upon South Viet Nam, northeastern Thailand, and southern Laos. (See item 23 February 1962.)

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 170411Z Feb 62.

- 17 Feb 62 The Voice of America began a schedule of broadcasts to Southeast Asia in the Lao and Thai languages.
(U) Dept of State Bulletin, vol XLVI (5 Mar 62),
- 18 Feb 62 Ambassador Young delivered to Foreign Minister Thanat a letter from the Secretary of State discussing US-Thai relations and, in particular, assessing SEATO's role in Thai security (for Young's recommendation that such a letter be sent, see item 10 February 1962). The Secretary of State noted several points he considered fundamental with respect to SEATO: in spite of imperfections, SEATO had been successful in deterring overt Communist aggression into the Treaty area; the US regarded a multilateral collective security pact such as SEATO as being greater than the sum of its parts, supporting and strengthening--not hampering--the individual efforts of the member nations; and SEATO was the essential and only instrument by which US obligations with respect to the security of Thailand were, within the US constitutional system, given legal validity and substance.

Secretary Rusk then reiterated the "solemn statement" already made to the Thai Government by Ambassador Young that the United States would give full effect to its obligations under Article 4, Paragraph 1, of the Treaty. It was the US view that this obligation to come to the defense of Thailand was not subject to the prior consent of any other SEATO member. It would be important, nevertheless, that as many SEATO members as possible participate in any SEATO action.

The Secretary of State also told Thanat that the US had given careful consideration to Thai proposals for changing SEATO voting procedures but doubted that any such changes would in fact increase Thailand's sense of security and confidence. With respect to Thailand's security against Communist aggression by means other than armed attack, the Secretary pointed to US action in South Viet Nam. There was no reason to believe that the US would do less for Thailand than for South Viet Nam in similar circumstances. The Secretary noted, however, that the SEATO pact provided "an important basis" for the US action in South Viet Nam; it was important that the US not be deprived of this basis for action.

The Secretary of State informed Thanat that he was prepared to join in considering "a suitable form" in which to express the above assurances publicly. In particular, he invited the Foreign Minister to come to Washington for discussions with the President and the Secretary in the near future. Finally, Secretary Rusk suggested that it would be preferable to postpone the SEATO Council meeting that was scheduled in Paris in April.

Upon receiving the letter, Foreign Minister Thanat made several preliminary comments to Ambassador Young. Thanat greatly appreciated the US expressions of friendship and assured Young that Thailand regarded the US as a "great and good friend." He agreed to the "indefinite" postponement of the SEATO Council meeting and said he

would immediately consult with his government regarding the Secretary's invitation to come to Washington. (His acceptance was formally confirmed on 23 February; for discussions during this visit, see items 2, 3, 5, and 6 March 1962.)

In instructions accompanying his letter, the Secretary of State had advised Ambassador Young that the parallel letter from CINCPAC to his Thai military counterpart that Young had suggested did not appear necessary at present, but that CINCPAC's scheduled visit to Bangkok early in March would provide an excellent opportunity for emphasizing the validity of SEATO as a military alliance. (See item 5 March 1962.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1232, 17 Feb 62; (C) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, 1230, 16 Feb 62, Bangkok to SecState, 1227, 18 Feb 62; 1260, 23 Feb 62.

19 Feb 62 Ambassador Brown informed Phoumi that he had been in direct contact with Souvanna with regard to the formation of a neutralist government and had told him that the Western powers still supported a government of national union under his leadership, provided he could produce a satisfactory cabinet. He should, therefore, produce a specific state of names. The US, Brown informed Phoumi, still believed that the posts of Defense and Interior should be held by the center. Both Souvanna and the US continued to believe that Phoumi should be a member of a coalition government in which he would make, with Souvanna, a very effective combination to serve the best interests of the country.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1182, 19 Feb 62.

19-28
Feb 62

The Conference remained quiescent, as more delegates continued to leave Geneva, including both Quinim Pholsena and Phoumi Vongvichit, who left for Laos on 28 February, in order, presumably, to be present during what was expected to be a crucial phase in the formation of a cabinet.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1127, 1 Mar 62.

20 Feb 62

A representative of the US Embassy in London called at the Foreign Office to ask if the views expressed informally by British officials on 13 February (see item) regarding possible UK assurances to Thailand under SEATO constituted an official British position. If this was so, the State Department instructions ran, the Embassy was to urge the Foreign Office to inform the Thai Government as soon as possible, thus backing up the US position on SEATO recently set forth in Secretary Rusk's letter to the Thai Foreign Minister (see item 18 February 1962). The Foreign Office spokesman replied, however, that consideration of possible British assurances to Thailand had just begun and that, among other things, the probable opposition of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to any new commitments would have to be overcome. Therefore, quick arrival at an official position must not be expected.

[For the period through 30 April 1962, no information indicating further steps in the development of a British

position has been discovered by the Historical Division.]

(S) Msgs, SecState to London, 4440, 19 Feb 62;
London to SecState, 3102, 20 Feb 62.

21 Feb 62

SNIE 10-62 assessed "Communist Objectives, Capabilities, and Intentions in Southeast Asia." The report concluded that the long-range objectives of the Communist Bloc in SEA were to eliminate US influence and presence and to establish Communist regimes throughout the area. Although the Communists efforts apparently followed no predetermined timetable or priority listing, it was believed that Laos and South Viet Nam were now the priority targets. In Thailand, the initial effort of Communist China and North Viet Nam would probably be directed toward increasing their subversive potential, particularly in the northeastern frontier area. Concurrently, the Soviet Union would continue to employ a combination of political pressures, military threats, and economic inducements to persuade the Thai Government to seek accommodation with the Bloc and adopt a more neutral policy. The neutralist positions of Cambodia and Burma were acceptable to the Communists; the report estimated that Communist activity in both countries would, therefore, probably remain at low key.

The SNIE estimated that the large ground forces of Communist China were capable of overrunning SEA and defeating the combined indigenous armed forces of the area, while the North Vietnamese forces were superior in quality to those of any other mainland SEA state. It was not believed, however, that the Communists intended to achieve their objectives in SEA by any large-scale military aggression but rather through subversion, political action, and support of "national liberation" struggles, thereby minimizing risk of Western, particularly US, military intervention. In Laos, for example, the Communists were unlikely to risk US military intervention so long as they believed that their objectives in Laos could be achieved by legal, political means. Should a military showdown occur between the RLG and Communist forces, however, the Communist side would win out, introducing additional forces from North Viet Nam if necessary.

The SNIE observed that over the past several years there had been a clear pattern of increasing Communist military, paramilitary, and political capabilities for pursuing Communist objectives in Southeast Asia, particularly in Laos and South Viet Nam. It was noted that "the Communist almost certainly believe that by sapping the independence of Laos they will be advancing their interests in Thailand as well."

(S) SNIE 10-62, 21 Feb 62.

22 Feb 62

Souvanna replied to Harriman's letter (see item 12 February 1962), which had expressed US willingness to deal directly with the Prince regarding the formation of a coalition government. After expressing his thanks to Harriman, Souvanna stated his great concern at the delay in forming a new government. This lack of progress, he believed, was due to his failure to convince the RLG of

the necessity that it renounce its claim to the Ministries of Defense and Interior. Souvanna and Souphanouvong definitely would not agree to the RLG's controlling these vital posts.

Souvanna then indicated his appreciation of the US efforts to force the Boun Oum government to yield the two cabinet posts. He warned, however, that Phoumi should neither be "forced to the point of a break" nor excluded from the coalition. The objective, Souvanna continued, was to form a unified government representing all factions rather than to alienate any group or its leader.

The Nam Tha incident, Souvanna maintained, had been greatly exaggerated. According to Souphanouvong, the Pathet Lao had merely driven back FAR units which, in violation of the cease-fire, had captured Muong Sai and Namou. Since the Pathet Lao forces had regained the positions they had held in May 1961, they would cease their operations unless the FAR again attacked. Souvanna added that he had, to no avail, urged Phoumi to restrain his troops. The situation, however, had remained calm for a week, and to make sure it would remain quiet, Souvanna had asked Ambassador Brown to take such steps as necessary to prevent further RLG provocations.

In closing, Souvanna declared that, before surrendering his mandate, he would make one last effort to "solve our national problem."

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1205, 22 Feb 62.

22 Feb 62

Souvanna, who had arrived in Vientiane the day before, presented to Ambassador Brown a cabinet list that was unacceptable to the US. This list of 18 names included four Pathet Lao, four RLG and ten neutralists, seven of whom were political adherents of Souvanna and three of who were not (the so-called Vientiane neutrals). Souvanna, in addition to being listed as Premier, was also designated Minister of Defense. Phoumi and Souphanouvong were both to be Vice Premiers; the former would also be Minister of Education, Sports and Youth, and the latter would be Minister of Economics and Planning.

US objections to Souvanna's slate were as follows:

1. It was based on the total of 18 members agreed upon by the three Princes at Geneva and upon Souphanouvong's formula for the center of seven Souvanna neutrals and three Vientiane neutrals (see item 19 January 1962). Further, only two of the three so listed were genuine Vientiane neutrals. The US preferred a cabinet of 19, with the center divided six and five, or at the minimum six and four. The Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Brown to insist upon a 19-man cabinet with a center divided six and five and to fall back to an 18-man cabinet with a center of six and four if necessary.

2. The slate, as submitted, would give the Pathet Laos an excellent opportunity to dominate all normal contacts between the government and the civil population.

This domination would be brought about through the naming of Pathet Lao as the Ministers of Economy, Planning and Finance, the Deputy Minister of Information, and by the naming of a Deputy Minister of Interior with reported Pathet Lao leanings.

3. Pathet Lao domination of Economy and Planning would make economic assistance by the US extremely difficult. It was essential to have a Secretary of State in this Ministry from the RLG faction as a balance to Souphanouvong as Minister.

Later in the day, Souvanna gave his list to Phoumi. (See item 24 February 1962 for Phoumi's reaction.)

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1208, 22 Feb 62; SecState to Vientiane, 757, 22 Feb 62.

23 Feb 62 After conferring among themselves, the US, British, French and Australian Ambassadors met with Souvanna and, after extended discussion of US objections to Souvanna's cabinet list (see item 22 February 1962), produced a list that Souvanna accepted and agreed to discuss with Souphanouvong. This list contained 19 names divided into groups of four each for the left and right and eleven for the center. This eleven included seven Souvanna and four Vientiane neutrals. There were, in addition, a rightist and a Vientiane neutral, both with cabinet rank, assigned to the Premier's office.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1212, 23 Feb 62.

23 Feb 62 Ambassador Thompson informed the Secretary of State that Ambassador Roberts and the Soviet Ambassador to Laos had traveled on the same plane from Paris to Moscow. According to Roberts, Abramov had appeared satisfied that the difficulties over the formation of a Laotian government would be resolved. He had expressed confidence in US policy as expressed by Brown in Laos and in Harriman and the State Department, but he had "doubts as to whether CIA supported US policy."

(S) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 2265, 23 Feb 62.

23 Feb 62 During the preceding week, the reinforcement of Nam Tha with the 1st Parachute Battalion had been resumed and completed, making a total of six FAR battalions in the area opposed to an estimated equal number of enemy battalions.

On 20 February, the enemy had directed small arms and mortar fire on a unit of the 2d Infantry Battalion in the Nam Tha perimeter. This was the first enemy action reported since 17 February (see item). The FAR forces had utilized the lull to make minor advances in an attempt to expand the defense perimeter.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 204525, 20 Feb 62; DA IN 204905, 21 Feb 62; (TS-NOFORN) J-3, Southeast Asia SITREP #8-62, 23 Feb 62.

23 Feb 62 Attempting to insure its participation in a US Governmental program giving new world-wide attention to civic action programs (see item 12 February 1962), the Laos Country Team recommended to the Secretary of State that a civic action program be initiated on a priority basis among the Kha tribesmen of the Bolovens Plateau. The

Country Team believed that US efforts to secure the firm loyalties of the Kha were dependent for success not only upon the formation of ADC units but upon economic development projects as well. If the Kha were successfully wooed, they would constitute a potentially effective barrier to Viet Minh traversal of the "Ho Chi Minh trail." Moreover, since the Bolovens Plateau was infiltrated by Pathet Lao but not by Kong Le forces, the Kha could be used by Souvanna as an anti-Communist force without weakening his political and military strength. These development projects could be conducted as civic action "self-help" programs, the Country Team concluded, by using to the maximum extent possible the indigenous military units created by MAAG.

The Country Team reported that a survey of area needs showed that road and airstrip construction, creation of an agricultural marketing cooperative, a trade school, and a dispensary, and assignment of a locally hired agricultural advisor--projects with a total initial cost of \$92,150--could be initiated soon and at least partially completed during Fiscal Year 1962. USOM Laos did not feel that it was authorized by its present terms of reference to undertake such a program; USOM was also reluctant to send its civilian technicians into such an insecure area. MAAG Laos, on the other hand, probably had the capability to initiate the program and was willing to assume responsibility for it, but had no funds. The Country Team recommended therefore that MAAG Laos have the initial responsibility for planning, programming and implementing the program, with USOM merely funding the commodity and local labor costs involved. USOM should, however, be authorized by AID Washington to begin participating in the program as soon as possible so that it would take over it the MAAG was withdrawn from Laos. The Country Team recommended further that, if consideration of any of the individual projects of the program should cause difficulty or delay in the authorization of funds, these should be set aside for the time being lest there be a delay in the initiation of other projects. (See item 22, 29 March 1962.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1211, 23 Feb 62.

23 Feb 62 CHMAAG Laos responded to CINCPAC's request for an evaluation of the feasibility and possible means of harassing Viet Minh troops moving through Mu Gia and Nape passes connecting central Laos with North Viet Nam (see item 17 February 1962). In the opinion of CHMAAG, both passes could be effectively interdicted by Lao guerrilla forces. These forces could crater roads, ambush, and lay anti-vehicle and antipersonnel mines, thereby slowing the flow of supplies, forcing the enemy to divert substantial forces to protect his line of communication, and perhaps causing him ultimately to abandon the routes altogether.

In the case of Mu Gia pass, there were no Meo in the vicinity, and the few Kha were heavily infiltrated with Pathet Lao sympathizers. However, [REDACTED] with MAAG support, had already trained 75 Lao from the area, where they now formed the nucleus of three separate guerrilla groups with a total strength of 300. These

groups had already demonstrated the ability to collect intelligence, harass the enemy, and attract recruits. When and if they found a safe base area, on which to build a "helio" strip and from which to recruit additional troops, a PARU team would be sent in. In the way of assistance, these groups would need the same materials they were presently receiving: weapons and ammunition, communication gear, food, and money. This assistance could be delivered by helicopter or helio-courier to those forces north of Route 12 (the highway running through Mu Gia pass) once a helio strip was constructed, but the area south of Route 12 was probably too thickly infested with Pathet Lao to make a helio strip practicable. At any rate, for the time being air drop appeared to be the most feasible means of delivery.

Near Nape Pass there were three Meo villages of either unknown or Pathet Lao sympathies; moreover, the Pathet Lao had been very active with construction and propaganda programs in the area. There was, however, a group of 25 Lao trained [redacted] who would soon enter the area with a PARU team and attempt to recruit an additional 200 Lao, if an already dispatched advance party could locate a secure base area. At its base area, the group would then receive arms and ammunition, food, and other equipment, be given further training, and if possible, afforded medical evacuation service. The group would have some trouble finding a suitable site for a helio strip in its area, because of an increasing Pathet Lao presence.

(TS) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, 231130Z Feb 62.

24 Feb 62

In a memorandum for the Joint Chiefs of Staff the Joint Strategic Survey Council declared that "denial of Laos to the communists as an avenue of infiltration into South Vietnam, Thailand, and Cambodia should be commonly understood as the over-all US objective in Laos, toward which all pertinent United States policies and efforts, political and military, should be oriented." JSSC recommended that the JCS adopt this position in discussions of the US over-all objective in Laos.

Currently the United States was seeking to halt Communist expansion by creating a neutral government in Laos that would make it a buffer state. JSSC believed that insufficient consideration was being given to additional or alternative measures that would become necessary should the diplomatic effort fail. In that event, military action between the Communist and anti-Communist forces in the area would determine the fate of Laos. Since the local anti-Communist forces could not control the access routes alone, plans involving varying kinds and degrees of US and Allied military support should be prepared. Hence JSSC recommended that "active planning and preparation within the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff be directed toward measures necessary to at least secure the Laotian approaches to South Viet Nam, Thailand, and Cambodia, in event current measures prove insufficient to achieve this objective."

On 28 February the JCS agreed to use the JSSC memorandum as a talking paper for a meeting with the President the following day. At the same time, they returned it to JSSC (Southeast Asia Study Group) for consideration in connection with the review of the CNO's memorandum of 5 February (see item). (For the Study Group's report, see item 9 March 1962.)

(S) JCS 2344/36, 24 Feb 62; (C) Note by Secy JCS to Control Div, 28 Feb 62; both in JMF 9155.2/3100 (2 Feb 62).

24 Feb 62 In a conversation with Soviet Charge Scorucov in Vientiane, Brown stressed the importance of bringing both Phoumi and Souphanouvong to agree to Souvanna's revised cabinet slate (see item 23 February 1962). The United States accepted responsibility for trying to induce Phoumi to concede Defense and Interior to the center group, but it would expect the Soviets at the same time to exert parallel influence on Souphanouvong to accept the Souvanna package, acquiescing in the inclusion of a strong and balanced center group. "Scorucov indicated agreement." The two conferees also agreed that "every effort should be made to keep things quiet at Nam Tha at this juncture."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1213, 24 Feb 62.

24 Feb 62 In an interview with Souvanna, Phoumi rejected Souvanna's original cabinet list (the one also rejected by the US; see item 22 February 1962). He objected that the neutralist center representation was unbalanced in favor of Souvanna's faction and contained two unacceptable pro-Communists, Quinim and Sisoumang. Souvanna denied that the two were pro-Communist. Phoumi declared that Souvanna could not be Prime Minister because he could not control the Pathet Lao. Souvanna replied that he had never claimed such control except in places where he had some independent forces. He then gave Phoumi his revised cabinet list (see item 23 February 1962). Phoumi countered with his own proposal for a government of six councils presided over by the King (see item 9 February 1962).

Souvanna, after recounting the above to Ambassador Brown, said that his next move would be to return to Khang Khay to discuss with Souphanouvong the revised list and Phoumi's proposal for a King's government. He thought it possible that Souphanouvong might accept Phoumi's scheme. If, however, he refused it but accepted the revised cabinet list, Souvanna would then present the list, as his final proposal, to Phoumi. If Phoumi rejected it, Souvanna would go to the King and advise him of the situation.

Brown, as instructed by the Secretary of State, told Souvanna that the United States would support the revised cabinet slate. Therefore, if Phoumi refused Souvanna's list after approval by Souphanouvong, the Western Ambassadors would carry out the agreed plan (see item 6 February 1962); they would follow up Souvanna's report to the King with parallel representations to the monarch supporting the list and declaring it to be the only acceptable alternative. Brown expressed doubt about the

practicability of Phoumi's six-councils proposal and the King's willingness to serve, but he told Souvanna that if the scheme proved acceptable to all three Princes and the King, the United States would also accept it. Brown advised Souvanna of his conversation with Scorucov earlier on 24 February (see item), in which the Soviet diplomat had appeared to accept responsibility for influencing Souphanouvong to agree to Souvanna's revised list. Brown told Souvanna he thought the "Soviets might be helpful to him if he needed them," and Souvanna replied that he would invoke their help if necessary.

Souvanna wished the United States for the present to withhold any further pressure or sanctions on Phoumi. Brown endorsed this course in his report to the Secretary of State, saying that the situation had reached a point where "we can only go to bat with Phoumi once and then we must do it with full force." The time for this would be when a cabinet list, agreed between Souvanna and Souphanouvong and acceptable to the United States, was in hand.

Later in the day, Phoumi informed Hasey that he could not accept the revised cabinet slate presented by Souvanna that morning. For that matter, said Phoumi, he would not accept any government headed by Souvanna. Hasey then counseled Phoumi that US policy was firm and that he must realize that no civil or military aid would be forthcoming if he did not go along with a Souvanna government that proved acceptable to the other parties. Phoumi requested that such a US decision be sent him in writing, but Hasey replied that Phoumi had been sufficiently forewarned. Phoumi then declared that the only proper solution was his own King-and-six-councils scheme, and he asked that the United States openly support it. He planned to go to Luang Prabang the following day to persuade the King to take an active role in achieving this solution. Phoumi was confident that the King would accept.

Summing up the day's activities for the Secretary of State, Brown said it was now clear that Phoumi would not under current circumstances accept a coalition government under Souvanna. If Souvanna was able to present a cabinet list agreed to by Souphanouvong and the US, the United States would shortly be faced with:

"A) decision as to whether and how we break once and for all with Phoumi, and

B) problem of how, in such case, to patch together a Souvanna government without Phoumi and his close friends, and

C) how we preserve the peace while all this is going on."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1214, 1216, 24 Feb 62; SecState to Vientiane, 762, 23 Feb 62.

25 Feb 62

Ambassador Brown, in a message to the Secretary of State, requested comment on certain steps he believed the US would have to take, and upon certain contingencies that

might arise, in the event that Souphanouvong agreed to a cabinet slate acceptable to the US. Under these circumstances, the Ambassador believed that the US Government and Souvanna would have to win acceptance of the slate from both the King and Phoumi. Should Phoumi refuse, the US would be forced to apply sanctions to make him reconsider. If he remained obdurate, he would have to be eliminated from the Lao political scene.

Having stated what the US would have to do, Ambassador Brown proposed a specific sequence for the US to follow if Phoumi rejected a slate of cabinet officers acceptable to both Souvanna and Souphanouvong as well as to the US. In making his proposal, the Ambassador declared that "our sanctions must now enter the military area," since this was judged to be Phoumi's "main source of strength."

Initially, Phoumi would be: 1) urged privately to agree, and assured that Western military and economic aid would be proffered to the new government; 2) told that the King would be informed that this particular slate was the only solution the US could accept; and 3) advised that US military and financial assistance would be given only to Souvanna's coalition. Phoumi would then be asked to reply within 48 hours.

If, as seemed most likely, Phoumi refused, the US would then suspend all deliveries of military aid and withdraw its military advisors together with all air support, except for those planes delivering food to isolated FAR or Meo units. These measures, Brown recommended, should be accompanied by a policy of, at the least, hindering the RLG's access to its financial reserves. The withdrawal of Filipino technicians, however, was not recommended, nor were US relief and rescue operations to be halted.

The suspension of military aid, the Ambassador conceded would have an adverse effect on the capabilities of the FAR, would deny the US intelligence of both FAR and enemy operations, and would deprive the US of control over the FAR. In addition, once the US advisors had been withdrawn, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to reintroduce them. Finally, the recall of the advisors would not be accompanied by any corresponding withdrawal on the part of the Communists.

Because of the damage that would be inflicted upon the combat capabilities of the FAR, the US, Ambassador Brown believed, would have to be prepared for increased military pressure by the Pathet Lao. Other contingencies that might occur were the possible need to find satisfactory replacements to fill vacancies in the proposed cabinet if Phoumi refused to participate, and the possibility of a direct confrontation between Phoumi and Souphanouvong if Souvanna, because of Phoumi's stubbornness, abandoned his attempt to form a coalition. Finally, the US should seek a peaceful means to expel the existing RLG in the event that Phoumi and his followers managed to maintain themselves in power.

Ambassador Brown, with the concurrence of the Country Team, believed that the proposed measures were unlikely to force Phoumi to participate in a Souvanna government and that the sanctions would be slow in eliminating Phoumi from the political scene, but he was convinced that a less drastic program would have no chance at all to succeed.

The Secretary of State, in commenting upon Ambassador Brown's plan, said that the proposed sequence of actions moved too rapidly to military sanctions. The basic purpose of US policy, Secretary Rusk pointed out, was to retain in the Souvanna government sufficient right-wing military and political strength to offset the power of the Pathet Lao. Thus, the US should exhaust the other means of exerting pressure on Phoumi before imposing military sanctions that could lessen the ability of the right-wing faction to resist the Pathet Lao.

The Secretary of State then offered the following specific comments:

1. The Ambassador should, operating within the wide latitude he had been given, "urgently reconsider using the various carrot proposals we have made with the aim of producing the carrot and stick combination with the strongest psychological impact on Phoumi."
2. Phoumi should be reminded that, since Souvanna had expressed his intention of postponing integration and demobilization until after his government had been in office for a time, the FAR would not be disbanded before Phoumi had had sufficient time to assess the impact of Souvanna's policies and, possibly, to reach agreement with Kong Le. Furthermore, the program of integration would not place the FAR at a disadvantage and would thus insure that Phoumi would have time in which to judge the probable consequences of Souvanna's programs.
3. The Ambassador would ask for any additional financial or other authority needed to encourage, using all overt and covert means at his disposal, a group or individual willing to support a coalition headed by Souvanna.
4. The Ambassador should obtain Souvanna's advice on how to deal with Phoumi and the other Vientiane leaders. Such consultations would clarify the US shift from Phoumi to Souvanna, encourage Souvanna, and obtain for the US the "best informed advice." Ambassador Brown, however, was also to consult with Phoumi.
5. The Ambassador might wish to reconsider the idea of boycotting Phoumi (see item 1 February 1962).
(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1219, 25 Feb 62;
SecState to Vientiane, 763, 25 Feb 62.

25 Feb 62

Phoumi called John F. Hasey to his home and expressed the sincere conviction that US policy was wrong and was only leading his country into Communist slavery. For

this reason Phoumi was continuing his fight against the implementation of US policies.

After observing that the US should not try to buy loyalty, Phoumi mentioned the US decision to withhold aid and asked that the RLG be officially informed in writing that the US Government was no longer willing to support the RLG. In making this request, Phoumi acknowledged that the US could not support a regime that did not adhere to US policy.

Phoumi next produced a letter from Kong Le that urged prompt acceptance of Souvanna on the grounds that, as each day passed, more Viet Minh troops were entering Laos. He did not, however, comment upon Kong Le's statement.

Finally, Phoumi gave an account of his visit on 21 February with Sarit at Bangkok. According to Phoumi Sarit, though admitting he could not give Phoumi much support, had urged him to "keep his military force intact and 'fight to [the] death.'"

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1220, 25 Feb 62.

26 Feb 62

Commenting on the instructions received from the State Department on 25 February (see item), Ambassador Brown wrote, "Apparently we in field and officers in Department have widely different appraisal of possibilities of influencing Phoumi to fit into our program. I am convinced, as are all members of my Country Team, my British, French and Australian colleagues, Prince Souvanna and most Lao with whom we have talked, that Phoumi will not accept a government under Souvanna with Defense and Interior in Souvanna's hands, except possibly . . . under most drastic duress." This, Brown observed, was a "disagreeable, hard and dangerous fact." The President, Harriman, and the Ambassador had all attempted to appeal to Phoumi by sketching the long-term prospect of his rise to ultimate power after a period of service as a major minister in a coalition government fully supported by the West. Phoumi, however, continued to insist that a Souvanna government with Defense and Interior in the center would lead to an early Communist take-over of Laos. None of the other inducements available appeared to Brown to hold any promise of influencing Phoumi, except severe sanctions.

The State Department reply the following day acknowledged the divergence of outlook between Washington and the Vientiane Embassy. Since it was imperative that Brown have a complete and accurate picture of US policy and the thinking behind it, William Sullivan and Michael Forrestal (recently appointed assistant to White House aide McGeorge Bundy) were being sent to Vientiane to advise him.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1225, 26 Feb 62; SecState to Vientiane, 769, 27 Feb 62.

26 Feb 62

The Deputy Secretary of Defense distributed the final report of "politico-Military Game SIGMA 1-62," a war game for Southeast Asia. (This game differed from more traditional war games in that "senior policy-makers" of

the US Government participated, influenced the game play, and, the Deputy Secretary said, received "the benefits associated with full-time participation.")

(TS) Politico-Military Game SIGMA 1-62, Final Report, 26 Feb 62; JMF 3511 (12 Dec 61) sec 1A. (S) JCS 1948/53, 15 Dec 61; JMF 3511 (12 Dec 61).

28 Feb 62 After a week of inactivity, enemy patrols began probing towards FAR positions in the vicinity of Nam Tha and fired on elements of the 28th Infantry Battalion about four miles east of the town. A FAR L-20 air craft began operations from the airfield, although normal traffic remained suspended and enemy mortars were believed to be still capable of interdicting the field.

FAR forces had continued to use the preceding week's lull to push their defenses outward. A company of the 28th Battalion had engaged an enemy force seven or eight miles east of Nam Tha late on the 27th or early on 28 February.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 206951, 28 Feb 62; DA IN 207154, 1 Mar 62.

2 Mar 62

In Burma the government of U Nu was overthrown by a military coup led by General Ne Win, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces. General Ne Win announced the formation of a Revolutionary Council (cabinet) to rule the country. (On 7 March, in an action that constituted US recognition of the new government, Ambassador Everton delivered a note to the Burmese Foreign Office in Rangoon.)

(U) Dept of State Bulletin, vol XLIV (26 Mar 62), 499.

2 Mar 62

Pursuant to the JCS Message of 14 February 1962 (see item), CINCPAC directed CHMAAG Laos to develop plans for the withdrawal of MAAG Laos within 32 to 75 days after the signing of an international agreement. In forwarding the guidance provided by JCS, CINCPAC elaborated a number of the points in fuller detail. Among other things, he asked that the planning consider the "desirability and practicability of evacuating specified Laotian personnel whose actions and value to US warrant their evacuation to Thailand or other friendly area." (See item 30 March 1962.)

CINCPAC also directed that the planning cover a further contingency not included in the JCS requirement, namely, US approval of a Lao request that elements of the MAAG continue in operation to assist the new provisional government in the regroupment, integration, and formation of the national army and the demobilization of excess forces, probably in conjunction with the ICC. The guidance CINCPAC furnished for the development of this further plan listed a number of objectives conceived with the furtherance of US interests in mind. It would be desirable, for instance, to seek the inclusion of the maximum number of personnel loyal to US interests in the reconstituted FAR, particularly in key positions. CINCPAC's guidance also suggested the organization of an intelligence capability that would report continuously the extent of Pathet Lao/Kong Le/Viet Minh compliance with agreements regarding amnesty, neutrality, and demobilization and the extent of enemy activity in infiltrating Laos or South Viet Nam through Laos.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, DA IN 207413, 2 Mar 62.

2 Mar 62

During a discussion with Thai Foreign Minister Thanat in Washington, Secretary Rusk declared that the Manila Pact formed an important basis for US security relations with Southeast Asia. This Pact, Rusk continued, was one means by which the US was meeting its obligations to South Viet Nam. The US considered its obligations under this treaty to be "individual and not just collective."

Thanat replied that Thailand still believed in the principle of collective security and would be willing to continue its participation in SEATO, if it received assurances regarding the US "understanding" of the treaty. On the other hand, the Thai Government would prefer a bilateral treaty with the US, for such an

agreement would end the present embarrassment and strife caused by the presence in SEATO of such colonial powers as France and Britain. After thus expressing his Government's willingness either to ally itself directly with the US or to retain membership in a modified SEATO, Thanat asked what the US intended to do about the allegedly ineffectual treaty organization.

Secretary Rusk responded with an expression of hope that regional cooperation in Southeast Asia would continue to grow. He further indicated that an association of the countries in the area, with strong Western support, would have some advantages, although the US of course did not wish to "undermine the present arrangement." Thanat thereupon reviewed the history of the Association of Southeast Asia, which dealt with such matters as customs and transportation, and said that Burma's recently installed military regime might orient that nation toward this cooperative arrangement.

The conversation then turned to Thailand's security, as Secretary Rusk observed that prompt action was essential if more drastic future measures were to be avoided. Both Rusk and Harriman, who also was present, pledged that the US would act as promptly as possible on programs designed to strengthen Thailand's security.

In reviewing the Lao situation, Thanat warned that there were but two groups in the kingdom, the Communists and the non-Communists. He further maintained that, if the RLG were forced from power, Laos would go the way of mainland China. Secretary Rusk disagreed, expressing confidence that the Lao themselves would not be a source of trouble if foreigners, particularly the Viet Minh, left the kingdom. Harriman added that the US also believed that Kong Le and Souvanna could be persuaded to sever their ties with the Pathet Lao.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1350, 8 Mar 62.

2 Mar 62 Souvanna, in the presence of Souphanouvong, told the Chairman of the ICC that Phoumi's proposal for a government of six councils under the King was not acceptable (see items 9 and 24 February 1962). (On 13 March, Souvanna sent Boun Oum a message formally rejecting the Phoumi proposal.)

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1241, 2 Mar 62; 1280, 13 Mar 62.

2 Mar 62 On 2 March, representatives of the US, UK, and French Embassies in Vientiane studied the outlined cease-fire proclamation drafted by the four-power working group in Geneva on 20 January (see item) and proposed a revised outline as follows (new segments are underlined):

A. First Proclamation

1. Note existence of de facto cease-fire.
2. Order all parties to refrain from taking any action which might lead to resumption of hostilities.

3. Prohibit troop reinforcements and importation of further war materials.

4. Declare amnesty for activities during hostilities.

B. Second Proclamation

5. Role of ICC in supervising cease-fire in accordance with the Geneva Agreements.

6. Release of all political prisoners and detainees.

7. Release of prisoners of war of all nationalities.

8. Elimination of mines and booby traps.

9. Establishment of tripartite committees or other appropriate machinery to carry out the cease-fire arrangements, with the co-operation of the ICC, and to prepare detailed regulations providing for:

a) Regrouping of troops.

b) Unification of the armed forces into a single national army.

c) Demobilization of all forces in excess of the requirements of the single national army and collection of surplus arms.

d) Disposal of excess war material.

C. Third Proclamation

10. The necessary details of the plan for regrouping, integration and demobilization worked out under point 9 above.

The original draft was thus divided into three proclamations on the assumption that this would take better account of time factors, avoiding the possible delay that the consideration of "certain points" might impose on the issuance of a single proclamation. The first section was to be proclaimed immediately after the government was established; the second a week thereafter; and the third proclamation would include the demobilization and integration plan previously formulated (see item 20 October 1961). It was considered wise to connect the proclamations with the actual Conference documents, by having the former referred to in the preamble of the RLG neutrality declaration. (See item 7 March 1962.)

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1239, 2 Mar 62.

2 Mar 62

Reacting to reports that approval of an expanded program for arming Kha tribesmen (see item 25 January 1962) was being delayed by technical problems in funding the program, [REDACTED] emphasized strongly to his

[REDACTED] the importance he attached to the program. [REDACTED] termed the Kha program "vital" to "recapturing the initiative" in southern Laos and, particularly, establishing armed assets eastward toward South Viet Nam. Already the program was "well on the way" to securing the Bolovens Plateau, and opportunities for expanding farther eastward might be lost for lack of a source of weapons and money. The program should not be made to wait upon a determination of the manner in which it should be funded. (See item 6 March 1962.)

(S)

3 Mar 62

A letter from Prime Minister Sarit to President Kennedy was delivered by Foreign Minister Thanat during his visit to Washington. Sarit wrote that the Thai and US Governments differed over the "assessment of personalities and possible future consequences," rather than over the fundamental objectives of policy toward Laos. The Thai Government, however, aware of "certain realities and necessities," had reluctantly made a genuine effort to adjust its views to those of the United States.

Although "shocked" by the failings of SEATO, Thailand still adhered to the treaty. Sarit hoped that the President might find it possible to strengthen Thailand's sense of security by declaring, either unilaterally or jointly, that in the event of aggression or subversion against Thailand the US would cooperate with that country in the defense of its freedom and independence, without waiting for a unanimous decision by SEATO. Such a US declaration, Sarit believed, might induce other SEATO members to fulfill their obligations. Sarit had authorized Thanat to reach agreement on a joint declaration of this type during his stay in Washington (see item 6 March 1962).

Sarit commented briefly on the Bowen Report regarding opportunities for US aid to the economic development of Thailand (see item 16 January 1962). Since the report was a substantial document deserving careful study, it would be some time before the Thai Government could give its reaction.

Sarit closed by expressing the hope that President and Mrs. Kennedy could visit Thailand.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1313, 4 Mar 62.

3 Mar 62

During a conversation with Thai Foreign Minister Thanat in Washington, Harriman outlined US policy regarding Laos. There was no acceptable alternative, Harriman declared, to the US objective of a free, neutral, and independent Laos, governed by a coalition with Souvanna as its Prime Minister. Although certain risks accompanied such a policy, the US nevertheless intended to work toward this objective and to give full support to a Souvanna government in an attempt to save the kingdom from Communist domination.

The President, Harriman maintained, would not allow Phoumi, who was preventing the formation of a Lao coalition, to dictate US policy by creating conditions under which US troops would have to be committed in Laos. If Phoumi cooperated with American policy, the US would attempt to secure for him an important cabinet post; if he refused to cooperate, he would be eliminated from the political scene. Phoumi, the US believed, could play a constructive role in any coalition government by being in a position to take advantage of the rivalry between the followers of Kong Le and the Pathet Lao. Phoumi's potential role might be made easier by the fact that Souvanna was aware of the friction between the two groups.

Thanat replied that, though the Thai Government did not share the American confidence in Souvanna, it did agree on the wisdom of a peaceful solution, Thailand, therefore, would cooperate with the US and would give full and open support to US policy.

Thanat denied the reports that Sarit was urging Phoumi to "fight to the death" (see item 25 February 1962). The truth, he continued, was that Phoumi had grown so politically blind that he could not understand that he would not receive US and Thai support. Like the US, Thailand did not want its forces "sucked in" to Laos.

The major problem to be solved after the formation of the new Lao government, Thanat remarked, was the establishment of adequate safeguards against Communist seizure of the country. Chief among these safeguards was the satisfactory disposition of the factional armies. Harriman agreed, adding that, in matters such as the reduction and integration of the armies, the West intended only to match the steps taken by the Communists.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 788, 6 Mar 62.

5 Mar 62

In Bangkok, Admiral Felt, Counselor Unger and Minister Martin of the US Embassy, and CHJUSMAG General Johnson called upon Sarit, who was attended by several of his advisors. Among the subjects discussed were Thanat's visit to Washington, the importance of SEATO, a personal message from President Kennedy to Sarit, intelligence of Chinese Communist activities in Laos, counterinsurgency plans, and SEATO exercises. In Unger's opinion, during this conversation Sarit maintained his previous positions on Laos and SEATO, "but with less conviction." It had appeared that the Thai Premier did not wish to enter a lengthy discussion of either SEATO or SEATO exercises until Thanat had reported the outcome of his consultations in Washington.

After an exchange of remarks indicating general satisfaction with the progress of the Washington talks, Admiral Felt spoke of the continued importance of SEATO from the military point of view. He called attention to the importance to Thailand of US bases in SEATO states such as the Philippine Republic. Sarit, however, replied that SEATO had not been useful, since "people were

continually in doubt about its role." Felt thereupon asked Sarit not to judge either SEATO's usefulness or the US willingness to defend Thailand on the basis of events in Laos. Sarit responded that the Thai people had come to view SEATO "as a mask to blind or deceive them." Admiral Felt, after mentioning the difference between political and military problems, described the purely military usefulness of the central planning being done at Bangkok. Sarit, however, observed that, although plans were being made, nothing was being done. In response, Admiral Felt, turning to a by-product of SEATO, noted that he soon would testify before the Congressional committees that dealt with MAP funds. These committees, in determining the allocation of funds, attached great significance to collective security arrangements such as SEATO.

When questioned by Admiral Felt about the situation in Laos, Sarit warned that the neglect of Laos could expose the whole of Southeast Asia to Communist conquest. A Communist-controlled Laos would facilitate the passage of Viet Minh troops into South Viet Nam and also would endanger the northern and northeastern portions of Thailand.

Admiral Felt then delivered from notes a personal message from President Kennedy to Sarit. When asked to comment upon the President's desire for a neutral and independent Laos, Sarit warned that the foremost consideration was whether Souvanna was truly neutral. Admiral Felt replied that it was important to win Souvanna's allegiance and to prevent his drifting into the Communist camp. Talk then turned to the coalition sought by the President, with Felt stressing the importance of keeping the FAR intact. If Phoumi chose to cooperate with Souvanna, the continued existence of the FAR would be more likely. Sarit observed, however, that, though Phoumi and Souvanna might agree, it was unlikely that Souphanouvong would cooperate in forming a reasonable coalition. The Thai Government, moreover, had received a secret report that Souvanna himself was considering a break with the Pathet Lao, a political development that might explain the recent inaction at Nam Tha.

Sarit next referred to reports from Phoumi that FAR radio monitors had overheard transmissions in both French and Chinese during the fighting at Nam Tha. Unger suggested that French was used because it was a language common to both the Pathet Lao and the Viet Minh. Admiral Felt then requested that US advisors be informed of all indications of Chinese intervention.

The problem of coordinating intelligence, Admiral Felt then declared, had complicated the task of fighting infiltrators and insurgents in South Viet Nam. On the basis of this experience the Admiral recommended, and Sarit agreed, that an intelligence coordination center be established in Thailand. The Prime Minister used the occasion to ask for more assistance in communications and to suggest that a special communications network be established for intelligence and counterintelligence units.

Turning to the subject of counterinsurgency planning, Admiral Felt assured Sarit that the plans prepared by JUSMAG were recommendations intended to stimulate Thai planning. General Johnson and his advisors were not trying to interfere in Thai affairs. At this point, one of Sarit's officers noted that the Thai supreme command had, in advance of JUSMAG, devised antiguerrilla and counterinsurgency plans. The Thai plans, which had by now been approved, closely resembled the later US plan. Unger added that the efforts to strengthen the border police, to encourage community development, and to execute other civil action programs formed a part of the overall countersubversion plan. Sarit replied that he understood the nature of the civil action programs but was concerned at the slow pace at which the US was carrying them out. Admiral Felt thereupon indicated that he would study the civil action plans in the light of his experience in South Viet Nam.

Returning to the general subject of SEATO, Admiral Felt expressed the hope that the organization's proposed exercises would be carried out. Sarit replied that one such exercise, AIR COBRA, had been reviewed by the Thai Air Force, which reported that the exercise was not useful and would prove too costly. Rephrasing his earlier complaint, Sarit objected that there were too many exercises, too many plans, and not enough action. Admiral Felt answered that cooperation by the US and Thai Air Forces in the support of ground troops, the purpose of AIR COBRA, would provide useful training for the airmen of both nations. The Admiral also stated that a paper had been prepared proposing the sharing of the expenses of SEATO exercises among the member nations, which he favored. Sarit, however, merely complained that his nation was always "required to contribute here and there," even to the Geneva Conference, which the Prime Minister considered valueless. The arguments presented by Felt for the carrying out of AIR COBRA--principally that military men of the two nations would profit from working together--did not seem to move Sarit. (See item 16 March 1962.)

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1341, 6 Mar 62.

5 Mar 62

Souvanna and Souphanouvong, in an interview at Khang Khay with Ambassadors Addis and Falaise, produced still another cabinet list. This list followed the same general pattern as the US-approved list of 23 February (see item): it contained 19 names, including four Pathet Lao, four RLG, seven Souvanna neutrals and four Vientiane neutrals; Souvanna was to be Premier and Phoumi and Souphanouvong were listed as Vice Premiers. The Defense and Interior Ministries were to be held by neutralists.

This latest effort at cabinetmaking was not acceptable to the United States because, through assignment of individual posts within the broad formula, the list became heavily weighted in favor of the Pathet Lao and the most leftist of the Souvanna neutrals. Further, these leftists would control most of the important ministries with direct contact with the people, such as Information, Sports, Youth, Social Action and Social Welfare. Three

of the four Vientiane neutrals, on the other hand, were nonentities. The list included no member of the prominent Sananikone family, such as Phoui or Ngou.

Ambassador Addis, however, argued with Ambassador Brown that the Western Powers should accept the list since, with the exception of Souphanouvong as Minister of Information, it was reasonably satisfactory.

In the course of the discussions with Ambassadors Addis and Falaize, Souphanouvong had stated definitely that Phoumi must be a member of the coalition government if it was to be workable. Souvanna indicated that he found it difficult to include Phoui Sananikone in the government because he had caused the arrest of Souphanouvong in 1959. When Falaize suggested that Kong Le was equally objectionable to Phoumi, Souvanna said that inclusion of Kong Le, listed as one of the Secretaries of State in Defense and Veterans, was not essential. To the suggestion that the United States might find Souphanouvong as Minister of Information very difficult to accept, Souvanna replied that the propaganda put out by that Ministry would be propaganda of the government, not of the Pathet Lao. As Prime Minister, he could personally supervise and correct it if Souphanouvong should deviate from the government line.

Both Ambassador Brown and the State Department, remembering the experience with Quinim as Minister of Information during 1960, placed little value on Souvanna's assurances regarding his ability to control Souphanouvong as Minister of Information. The State Department agreed with Brown that it was important to mobilize British and French support, in London and Paris, for the US objections to the list. The State Department had received information that Addis had already recommended to London that Souvanna's latest list be accepted "on grounds next revision might be even worse."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1248, 5 Mar 62;
SecState to Vientiane, 784, 5 Mar 62.

5 Mar 62 Another meeting between Thanat and Secretary Rusk (see item 2 March 1962) got underway as the two men agreed to issue on the following day a communique dealing primarily with Thai security (see item 6 March 1962).

Thanat, referring to the possible effects of the communique, stressed the need for a public announcement regarding the next meeting of the SEATO Council. Such an announcement would forestall speculation that no meeting would be held. Secretary Rusk, however, was inclined to await clarification of the Lao situation and substantial agreement among members on the future of SEATO before calling a meeting of the Council. He added that he did not wish to attend a session that would produce nothing but disagreement. The Secretary then suggested that an informal meeting might be held when the various Foreign Ministers gathered in New York for the autumn session of the UN General Assembly. Thanat agreed that this might be possible.

The Secretary of State emphasized that the US was not surrendering its interest in Laos. The problem, he continued, was to rid the kingdom of the Viet Minh so that the US could deal with the Lao alone. Any demobilization of the FAR would be strictly related to similar action by the rival groups, and US economic and other assistance would be directed solely toward bolstering a neutral and independent Laos.

In replying to the Secretary's statements, Thanat denied that Sarit was supporting Phoumi's opposition to a Lao coalition. Although the Thai Government disagreed with the American evaluation of Souvanna, it nevertheless would go along with US policy. Thailand, however, hoped that the US would not become so committed to Souvanna that nothing could be salvaged if the situation did not evolve as planned. Thanat said that until his own recent conversation with Harriman (see item 3 March 1962) the Thai Government had been unaware of the intensity of US feeling regarding Phoumi. Upon learning of the US attitude, the Thai Foreign Minister had advised Sarit to invite Harriman to Bangkok for a joint meeting with Phoumi.

Secretary Rusk then observed that prompt reaction to unfriendly acts was necessary if the aggressor was to be deterred. Thanat replied that his nation had reacted promptly to the crisis at Nam Tha. He noted that Soviet pressures on Thailand had subsided since the Thai Government had made it clear that its relations with the USSR would not be expanded while events in Laos threatened Thai security.

The need for greater regional cooperation in Southeast Asia was the last subject touched upon by Secretary Rusk. In response to a question from the Secretary, Thanat stated that, though Ne Win himself favored collaboration between Burma and the other non-Communist nations of Southeast Asia, certain members of his government hesitated to adopt such a policy. If Ne Win remained in office for a long enough time, Burma might join the Association of Southeast Asia. Thailand, Thanat pointed out, entertained hopes that both Burma and Indonesia eventually would join the Association.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1350, 8 Mar 62.

5 Mar 62

In Washington, Thanat was handed a letter from President Kennedy to Prime Minister Sarit. It was not to be made public at present, and future release would depend on the receipt of a suitable reply from Sarit and the progress of events in Laos.

The President advised Sarit that the US shared Thailand's concern for its security as well as its determination to resist Communism. The independence and territorial integrity of Thailand, the President continued, were of the greatest importance to the United States. After alluding to the value of Thanat's visit to Washington, President Kennedy referred to the joint statement to be issued at the close of the current discussions (see item 6 March 1962). He affirmed that the communique fully

reflected his own position and that of the US Government regarding both US-Thai security relationships and US concern for the progress and well-being of Thailand. (For Sarit's reply, see item 13 March 1962.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1351, 8 Mar 62.

5 Mar 62

President Kennedy received Thai Foreign Minister Thanat accompanied by Secretary of State Rusk. The President expressed appreciation for Thanat's efforts and remarked that his visit had worked out well and that the problem of one nation's being able to block a proposed SEATO action had been resolved to the mutual satisfaction of the Thai and US Governments. Thanat agreed with the President's observations.

Thanat also agreed that the contents of President Kennedy's letter to Sarit (see item 5 March 1962) should not be made public pending further developments in Laos. Its immediate release might be interpreted as a US attempt to write off Laos. After Sarit had replied, the two Governments could consult regarding the release of both the President's message and the Thai Premier's response.

President Kennedy then declared that the only acceptable course of action which would prevent the large-scale violation of the Lao cease-fire and save the kingdom from chaos was the formation of a coalition government headed by Souvanna. On the other hand, the least acceptable course would be the resumption of fighting, for, under present circumstances, the Pathet Lao would quickly overwhelm the FAR. The President added that he could not, without "very good reason," commit US troops in a given area. Intervention under SEATO Plan 5, the President continued, would be very hazardous. After noting that both France and Britain supported Souvanna, the President, although denying that he was trying to force Thailand to adopt an "unpleasant course," nevertheless urged that Thailand also support Souvanna "and see how the situation evolved."

Thanat replied that his Government supported Phoumi solely because of the latter's strong stand against Communism. The President, however, repeated that Phoumi could not defeat the Communists if open warfare were resumed. Under such circumstances, he said, "the US and Thailand would find it difficult to intervene alone" in a landlocked region where US sea and air power could not be used to the best advantage.

The President then emphasized that he did not want Phoumi to quit, but to cooperate by participating in the coalition government. He hoped Sarit would so counsel Phoumi. Should Phoumi withdraw from the Lao political scene, he would upset the US plan for a balanced coalition.

Thanat thereupon warned that certain safeguards would be required if Souvanna were made Prime Minister. Foremost among these was the placing "in safe hands" of

the Defense and Interior portfolios. Although President Kennedy agreed that the acceptance of Souvanna involved certain dangers; he declared that the US and Thailand should place their faith in the Prince.

Secretary Rusk then called attention to the article of the Geneva Agreements that called for the withdrawal of all foreign troops. Thanat stated that it would be difficult to rid Laos of covert Viet Minh units. He was not asking the US to commit troops, but the Thai Foreign Minister wished that some solution other than a Souvanna government could be tried, perhaps Phoumi's King-and-councils scheme. The President, however, replied that, since so many of the interested nations had endorsed Souvanna, there was not time to seek similar agreement on an alternative to a coalition headed by the Prince.

The President then summarized his case. The US, he said, respected Phoumi and wanted him to serve in the coalition. Phoumi's cooperation was, in fact, urgently needed, for without him the coalition would become unbalanced and the chances for its success would consequently be reduced. Finally, Sarit could help the US to gain Phoumi's cooperation.

Thanat agreed to report the conversation to Sarit. He also invited the President and Mrs. Kennedy to visit Thailand and expressed the hope that Mrs. Kennedy could go to Bangkok after her visit to India. The President extended his thanks for the invitation but said that the trip to India, already too long, was being curtailed.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1367, 10 Mar 62.

5 Mar 62

CHMAAG Laos reported to CINCPAC that in view of the political situation and the withholding of the US cash grant, he had surveyed the morale, attitude, and pay status of FAR units. The survey indicated cordial relations between FAR and US personnel, good to excellent morale in FAR units, and units paid through January, with some paid through 20 February.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 208664, 5 Mar 62.

6 Mar 62

Secretary Rusk and Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman issued a joint statement marking the end of Thanat's visit to Washington, 1-6 March, during which he had conferred with the President as well as the Secretary of State. The situation in Laos had been "reviewed in detail" and full agreement had been reached on the necessity, for the stability of Southeast Asia, of achieving a free, independent, and truly neutral Laos.

In the joint statement Secretary Rusk reaffirmed that the United States regarded the preservation of Thailand's independence and integrity as vital to the national interest of the United States and to world peace. From this followed the firm intention of the United States to aid Thailand in resisting Communist aggression and subversion. The two conferees agreed that SEATO was an effective deterrent to direct Communist aggression, providing the basis for the signatories

collectively to assist Thailand in case of Communist armed attack. The Secretary of State assured Thanat that in the event of such aggression the United States intended to give full effect to its SEATO obligation, in accordance with its constitutional processes, and further, that the United States recognized this Treaty obligation to be individual as well as collective and hence not dependent upon prior agreement of all the SEATO signatories. During review of the mutual efforts of the two governments to increase the capabilities and readiness of the Thai armed forces the two had taken note that the United States intended to accelerate future deliveries to the greatest extent possible.

With regard to indirect aggression, the Thai Foreign Minister gave assurance of the determination of his government to meet the threat by vigorously pursuing measures for the economic and social welfare and the safety of its people. Secretary Rusk stated that the United States regarded its economic and military assistance agreements with Thailand as providing an important basis for US actions to help Thailand meet indirect aggression, and he reviewed the actions being taken to assist South Viet Nam under similar agreements. Taking note of the work of the Joint Thai-United States Committee in Bangkok, the two agreed that the Committee should continue its efforts to assure effective use of Thailand's resources and US aid in promoting the country's development and security.

(U) Dept of State Bulletin, XLVI (26 Mar 62), 498-499.

6 Mar 62

Admiral Felt, Counselor Unger, Minister Martin, and Colonel Croizat called upon Phoumi at the Lao Embassy in Bangkok. At the outset of the meeting, Phoumi seized the initiative by reviewing the military and political situations. He declared that the military plans prepared over the last six months were just short of complete realization. In the Plaine des Jarres, he contended, the Pathet Lao controlled only the main road, and in Sam Neua Province, the "central bastion position" was again in the hands of the FAR. Phoumi, admitting the dependence of his forces upon US aid, claimed that with American assistance the FAR could defeat the Pathet Lao, but not the Pathet Lao and Viet Minh combined.

Turning to political matters, Phoumi stated that he intended soon to discuss his King-and-councils proposal with Souvanna, who, he claimed, was willing to listen to the plan (for a contrary indication, see item 2 March 1962). He also noted that Souvanna had confessed an inability to control the Pathet Lao. Phoumi, according to Admiral Felt, then inquired if the US intended to abandon Laos. The Admiral assured him that the US had no such plans, and Unger emphasized the US desire for a free, independent, and neutral Laos. President Kennedy, Admiral Felt observed, was aware of Phoumi's abilities and qualities of leadership and believed that Phoumi could play a major role in a coalition government.

Speaking from notes, Admiral Felt delivered the President's warning that, in the event of renewed

hostilities, the US would not support the RLG. Although the message "obviously contained some bitter medicine," both Phoumi and the Lao Ambassador, who also was present, remained impassive throughout the Admiral's presentation.

When Felt had finished, Phoumi denied that he could justly be charged with unwillingness to cooperate. He reviewed the entire history of the Laotian discussions, asserting that it proved he had always been willing, even eager, to negotiate with Souvanna. Phoumi then pointed out that he was now willing to accept Souvanna as a president of one of the six councils that would be formed under the proposed King-and-councils government. He believed, nevertheless, that Souvanna had never proved himself to be truly neutral, and it was in this regard that Phoumi's views differed from those of the US Government. If Phoumi ever felt assured that Souvanna was both neutral and capable of forming a government, he would "recommend" the Prince.

Phoumi then returned to his King-and-councils proposal, claiming that King Savang approved it. As a constitutional monarch, the King himself could not advocate any such formula, so Phoumi was acting as his spokesman.

Admiral Felt then asked why the RLG had failed to win Kong Le away from Souvanna. Phoumi replied that Kong Le assumed that Souvanna would form a predominately Communist government and saw no point in defecting to the faction that probably would be the weakest element in the coalition.

In conclusion, Admiral Felt called upon Phoumi to provide evidence that he was willing to cooperate with the US. Such evidence, the Admiral continued, would be necessary if Phoumi was to retain any support by the US public. Phoumi replied that US military assistance was vital to the continued operation of the FAR and expressed the hope that this conversation would have beneficial results in that regard.

Both Unger and Admiral Felt believed that delivery of the President's message had not altered Phoumi's thinking. Unger cited further evidence of this in remarks made by Phoumi later in the day. In response to questions by reporters concerning progress toward a coalition, Phoumi repeated his demand for control over Defense and Interior, alleging in the process that Souvanna had not proved himself neutral and therefore could not be trusted with the two vital portfolios. Although Ambassador Brown had urged that the Phoumi-Felt meeting be kept secret, Phoumi spoke of it to the press. He told reporters that the meeting would result in a better understanding between the Lao and US Governments, leaving the possible impression that his continued insistence on control of the Defense and Interior posts had US approval.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1348, 7 Mar 62;
CINCPAC to JCS 080834Z Mar 62.

6 Mar 62

Mr. Gordon Jorgensen and Mr. John Hasey, representatives of the US Embassy at Vientiane, called upon Phoumi at the Lao Embassy in Bangkok. The Americans, among other things, offered Phoumi the inducement of financial support if he would enter a Souvanna government, outlined US policy toward Laos, and listened to Phoumi's views on the current situation. The visit by Jorgensen and Hasey followed by less than an hour the interview in which Admiral Felt had delivered a message to Phoumi from President Kennedy stating that the US no longer would support Phoumi if hostilities were resumed (see previous item). The only immediate result of the Jorgensen-Hasey visit was a suggestion by Phoumi that he might retire to Thailand rather than serve under Souvanna.

Jorgensen and Hasey first told Phoumi of a report that Souvanna and Souphanouvong had rejected his King-and-six-councils scheme. Because of this rejection, the only solution appeared to be a coalition headed by Souvanna. The US, the two Americans continued, wanted Phoumi to serve in such a government, even though he could not hold either the Defense or Interior portfolio. While aware that Phoumi would be hampered because of Souvanna's control over finances, the US nevertheless believed that Phoumi, in a post such as Minister of Information with authority over Youth and Sports, could perform useful services. In fact, the US was prepared under such circumstances to give financial support to his anti-Communist undertakings (see items 5 January and 7 March 1962).

Before Phoumi made his decision, the Americans continued, he should have a clear understanding of US policy. Jorgensen then gave Phoumi a message, similar in content to that already delivered by Admiral Felt, which stated that President Kennedy had so defined US policy that intervention on behalf of the RLG was out of the question. According to the Presidential message, the US Government not only would abandon Phoumi if he either refused to join a coalition or caused negotiations toward one to fail; it also would refuse to assist him if the other side attacked, whether as a result of Soviet inability to restrain the Pathet Lao and Viet Minh or because of Communist impatience at the slow progress of negotiations.

Following Jorgensen's exposition, Hasey, "as a friend," elaborated upon the message. The US, Hasey pointed out, considered Phoumi largely responsible for Souvanna's failure to form a coalition. The US also believed the "untenable and dangerous situation in Laos" was due in large measure to Phoumi's actions. Thus, Phoumi's conduct, along with the conviction that a Souvanna coalition was the only solution, had caused the US to refuse to support the FAR if hostilities broke out. If Phoumi should, as the US desired, head the anti-Communist elements within the coalition, he would receive US funds to support his activities.

Phoumi responded by stating that the US had erred in backing Souvanna and in placing its trust in him.

Souvanna was not the strong man and leader that the US believed him to be. Rather, Souvanna was no more than the front man for Souphanouvong and the Pathet Lao, just as Boun Oum was Phoumi's own front man. According to Phoumi, Sarit had recently agreed to try to persuade the US of its error in supporting Souvanna.

Turning to the question of cabinet posts, Phoumi said he would not serve in a Souvanna-led coalition unless he received the Defense portfolio, thus insuring that he retained some measure of military power. When the visitors suggested that logically the command structure of the FAR would remain intact until integration had taken place, Phoumi dismissed this as "American logic, not Lao." Phoumi pointed out that once Souvanna became Premier and Minister of Defense he could change FAR commanders at will. Further, Phoumi did not consider Finance or Information to be satisfactory substitutes for the Defense post.

During the conversation, Phoumi defended his King-and-councils scheme, assuring the Americans that he could, in time, convince Souvanna and Souphanouvong to accept it. When told that time was too short for this undertaking, Phoumi replied that patience was a virtue that should be practiced.

Phoumi also insisted that the FAR was now stronger than the enemy forces and that, with just a little more backing, he could win. The US, by withholding support, was playing into the hands of the Communists. Hasey and Jorgensen, however, told Phoumi that the US did not share his high opinion of the FAR and that, because of the weakness of the Lao Army, a prompt settlement was necessary.

In response to repeated urging to rally the foes of Communism by accepting a cabinet post in a Souvanna government, Phoumi declared that his RLG colleagues and the King himself would "laugh at him and accuse him of being a slave of the Americans" if he advocated working with Souvanna. To a final reminder of the US offer of private financial support, Phoumi said that perhaps his visitors should "try this on someone else." "I don't think I can go along with a Souvanna Phouma government and I may retire to Thailand."

[REDACTED]

6 Mar 62

Ambassador Brown advised the Secretary of State that the British, and to some extent the French, did not share the US view that Souvanna's proposals (see item 5 March 1962) were not acceptable. Since he considered it absolutely essential that the Western Allies present a united front to Souvanna and Souphanouvong, Ambassador Brown recommended the following:

1. The US Ambassador at Vientiane would ask the UK Ambassador to inform Souvanna that his proposals required further consultation and that the Allied Ambassadors would contact him as soon as possible.

2. The Western Ambassadors would seek common ground upon which to base their objections to Souvanna's plan and attempt to agree on counterproposals. The US Government, the Ambassador continued, should immediately begin similar discussions with the Governments of France and Britain.

3. When the US had obtained agreement from Britain and France, Ambassador Addis would return to Khang Khay with a Western response to Souvanna's proposal.

4. Meanwhile, the Ambassadors would continue urging Phoumi to enter into the negotiations.

Secretary of State Rusk concurred in Ambassador Brown's recommendations but suggested that, if the Western Ambassadors had difficulty in reaching agreement, the British Ambassador should return shortly to Khang Khay with at least the US reaction and counter-proposals. In the meantime, the Department of State would discuss Souvanna's list with British and French diplomats in Washington.

Later in the day, the Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that the British Foreign Office had agreed that Souphanouvong would be unacceptable as Minister of Information and had indicated that the neutral center needed strengthening. French comments had not yet been received.

(See item 7 March 1962.)

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1251, 6 Mar 62;
SecState to Vientiane, 786, 6 Mar 62; (C) Msg, SecState
to Vientiane, 791, 6 Mar 62.

6 Mar 62

Approval was granted for the arming of 12 100-man
Kha ADC units (see items 25 January and 2 March 1962).
US stocks in Thailand would be drawn upon for necessary
equipment; [REDACTED]

7 Mar 62

In conversations with Mr. Hasey of the Vientiane Embassy staff, Boun Oum agreed to help persuade Phoumi to enter a Souvanna-led coalition. While waiting at the Vientiane airport for the plane bringing Phoumi from Bangkok, Hasey privately informed the Prince that the Embassy had received word that Souvanna and Souphanouvong had rejected Phoumi's King-and-councils plan (see item 17 February 1962). As a result, Hasey continued, the only possible solution appeared to be a coalition headed by Souvanna, in which the Ministries of Defense and Interior were controlled by the center group. The US, moreover,

had urged Phoumi to enter such a government in order to rally anti-Communist elements and to protect his supporters.

Both world opinion and US policy, Hasey pointed out, called for prompt agreement on a peaceful solution. Boun Oum, by helping Phoumi to win cabinet approval for a compromise with Souvanna, could play a key role in speedily resolving the crisis. Because of Boun Oum's importance in this regard, the US, in addition to continuing to support the Prince in his present work of spreading an anti-Communist influence throughout Laos, was "prepared to help him out personally, financially, in order that he might continue his work even though he was outside the government" (see items 5 January and 6 March 1962).

After listening to Hasey's remarks, Boun Oum agreed to a second private meeting later in the day. During this afternoon conversation at the Prince's residence, Hasey reviewed his earlier arguments that Phoumi should be persuaded to become an anti-Communist influence within a Souvanna government. When Boun Oum remarked that Souvanna was weak and easily influenced, Hasey responded that, for exactly this reason, Phoumi and Leuam Insisengmay should serve in the cabinet.

Finally, Boun Oum stated that, as a result of the morning's conversation, he realized that a solution would have to be found in the shortest possible time. The military, however, would object to a Souvanna coalition, since they were genuinely fearful of their safety as well as their positions under a new regime. Hasey observed that the only alternative to a coalition was the resumption of hostilities against a superior enemy. As to the fears of the generals, Boun Oum was told that "logically" the FAR command structure would remain intact until after integration, although "this had to be made clear to Souvanna." After receiving Hasey's personal opinion that a coalition was the only possible solution, Boun Oum expressed appreciation for the offer of personal aid and declared that he would cooperate in persuading Phoumi to join a Souvanna government.

7 Mar 62

The US, UK, French, and Canadian working group met in Geneva to discuss the outline of the Lao cease-fire proclamation recently formulated by the Western Embassies in Vientiane (see item 2 March 1962). Although the US delegate announced that the Department of State had approved the draft, including the supporting reasons for its being divided into three proclamations to be issued successively, the "consensus of the meeting was generally unfavorable." Opposition stemmed from the belief that it was "difficult enough to sell Souvanna one proclamation, let alone three." The group also noted that the important detailed plan for the regrouping, integration, and demobilization of forces was reserved for the third proclamation and that the Geneva Conference would have no opportunity to take formal notice of either the second or third proclamation, since it was probable that only the first one would have been issued at the time of the final Conference plenary session. It was also felt that the link that was to connect the cease-fire proclamation

to the Conference protocol was not "meaningful"; the Canadians in particular felt that the ICC's role was insufficiently safeguarded thereby.

The UK delegation, which had called the meeting, stated that it would inform the Foreign Office of the views expressed and would recommend that further discussions on the matter be either postponed or continued in the respective capitals.

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 789, 6 Mar 62; Geneva to SecState, CONF 1130, 8 Mar 62.

7 Mar 62

The Western Ambassadors met at Vientiane to seek a formula that would serve as a counterproposal to the cabinet slate recently offered by Souvanna and Souphanouvong (see item 5 March 1962). The Ambassadors agreed, subject to the approval of their Governments, upon a cabinet that would be composed approximately as follows:

1. Pro-West. Phoumi as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Social Action, Youth, and Sports; Leuam Insisengmay, Minister of Finance.

2. Xieng Khouang neutrals. Souvanna Phouma as Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior; Pheng Phongsavan, Minister of Information; Khamsouk Keola, Minister of Health; Sisamoung Sisaleuamsak, Minister of Posts, Telephone, and Telegraph; Quinim Pholsena, Minister of Social Welfare and Labor.

3. Vientiane neutrals. Nhouy Abhay, Minister of Education; Ngon Sananikone, Minister of Public Works; Oudom Souvannavong, Minister of Cults and Justice.

4. Pathet Lao. Souphanouvong, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs; Phoumi Vongvichit, Minister for Economy and Planning.

The posts of Secretaries of State for the various Ministries would be distributed in a manner appropriate to the political allegiance of the Ministers.

This agreed formula differed slightly from Ambassador Brown's initial proposal in that he had suggested Phoumi as Minister of Information with additional duties regarding youth and sports. In seeking to list the strongest possible Vientiane neutrals for cabinet posts, the Ambassadors were hopeful that Ngon Sananikone could be included, but they felt that appointment of Phoumi Sananikone was "not a real possibility." Anticipating objection in some Western capitals to Souphanouvong as Minister of Foreign Affairs and recalling his earlier claim to the Information post, the Ambassadors discussed which of the two--Foreign Affairs or Information--would be less dangerous in the hands of the Pathet Lao. No conclusion was reached, but an exchange within the agreed listing, making Souphanouvong Minister of Information and Pheng Phongsavan Minister of Foreign Affairs, was proposed as a possible alternative.

Once the proposed cabinet slate was approved in Paris, London, and Washington, UK Ambassador Addis would present it to Souvanna. During this visit to Souvanna, Addis, the US Ambassador believed, might enlist the aid of Soviet Ambassador Abramov, who was expected to be in Khang Khay at the time.

The Secretary of State, in response to Ambassador Brown's report of the Vientiane meeting, informed him that he accepted the Ambassador's judgment that the slate agreed upon by the Western diplomats represented the best government that the US could hope to obtain under existing circumstances. Secretary Rusk added, however, that he would be most reluctant to have Souphanouvong made Minister of Information unless such an appointment would result in strengthening the neutral center, for example, by the addition to the cabinet of Phoui Sananikone.

(See items 7-9, and 10 March 1962.)

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1257, 7 Mar 62; SecState to Vientiane, 793, 7 Mar 62.

7-9
Mar 62

Officers of the Department of State on 7 March informed Australian, British and French diplomatic representatives at Washington of Secretary Rusk's approval of the proposed cabinet slate agreed upon by the Western Ambassadors at Vientiane (see item 7 March 1962). The representatives were asked to recommend that their Governments not only accept the agreed slate but also give their Ambassadors in Vientiane great latitude in supporting Ambassador Brown. When the French diplomat expressed doubt that his Government would agree to placing Souphanouvong in charge of Lao foreign affairs, the State Department spokesman argued that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would be less dangerous in Pathet Lao hands than Education, Finance, or Information. This post would afford Souphanouvong little influence on internal Lao affairs, including the elections; moreover, Lao foreign policy would largely be established ahead of time by the Geneva accords under which the new government would be set up.

On 8 March, the State Department received word that the British Government concurred in the presentation to Souvanna of the agreed slate and had instructed Ambassador Addis to support the US Ambassador in Vientiane. The Australian Government reacted in similar fashion.

Although still without instructions from Paris regarding presentation of the Western proposal to Souvanna, Ambassador Falaize stated in Vientiane on 9 March that he was prepared, on his own responsibility, to approve a visit by Addis to Khang Khay. The British Ambassador thereupon informed Souvanna that he would like to make the trip on the following day, 10 March.

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 794, 7 Mar 62; 796, 8 Mar 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1261, 1262, 9 Mar 62.

8 Mar 62 In connection with the Laos Country Team efforts to begin a civic action program among the Kha in the Bolovens

Plateau (see item 23 February 1962), CHMAAG Laos requested of CINCPAC that one 3-man Civil Affairs Mobile Training Team (CAMTT) be assigned to MAAG Laos for at least six months (see item 18 April 1962). CHMAAG reported that, because of Kha suspicions of the Lao, it was not advisable to use FAR personnel in Kha areas. Friendly relations between Lao and Kha should be established gradually by US personnel; that is the CAMTT.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 209259, 8 Mar 62.

8, 9
Mar 62

With 105-mm. howitzers brought from Luang Prabang, FAR forces fired on enemy positions east of Nam Tha on 8 March. The next day the enemy retaliated by shelling FAR positions about two miles east of the town with six rounds, estimated as 82-mm. This was the first enemy ground activity since 28 February. The FAR howitzers replied with 72 rounds.

No patrol activities or engagements were reported, and the air field was reopened to normal traffic.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 209418, 071310Z Mar 62; DA IN 209255, 081320Z Mar 62; DA IN 210168, 101200Z Mar 62; (TS-NOFORN) J-3, Southeast Asia SITREP 10-62, 8 Mar 62.

8, 9
Mar 62

During a conversation in Paris between Manac'h, the Director of Asian Affairs in the French Foreign Office, and a US Embassy official, the former expressed French concern over the suggestion that Souphanouvong become Foreign Minister in a coalition government (see item 7 March 1962). While Manac'h recognized that Souphanouvong might use the Information Ministry to develop an organization which could influence the elections, he felt that the control of Laos relations with the United Nations, Communist China, and the Soviet Union that Souphanouvong would gain as Foreign Minister would pose serious long-term problems.

In regard to the cabinet list recently proposed by Souvanna, a list which the United States had found unacceptable (see item 5 March 1962), Manac'h adopted a hands-off attitude, stating that the Foreign Office "prefers to deal in general principles rather than in specific individuals." He did, however, intend to recommend that Ambassador Falaize be given wide latitude on this question. The French felt that any sort of mutually acceptable agreement was more desirable than protracted bargaining and the concomitant postponement of a solution.

This view was re-emphasized on the following day, in a message (revealed confidentially to a US official) of instruction to Falaize from Couve de Murville. While noting that Souphanouvong would probably have to receive one out of the three "political" Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Information, or Education, Couve opposed granting him Foreign Affairs and suggested Information as the least dangerous alternative. Falaize was granted considerable

discretion in developing an acceptable formula concerning the other, presumably less vital, portfolios. Nothing was said regarding the US concern about the unimpressive caliber of the "non-Xieng Khouang neutrals," or the US anxiety about the dangers of having the Pathet Lao acquire any of the ministries exercising an important direct influence on the Lao people (see item 5 March 1962).

(S) Msgs, Paris to SecState, 4199, 8 Mar 62; 4217, 9 Mar 62.

9 Mar 62

The Southeast Asia Study Group reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff its conclusions regarding the questions raised by the Chief of Naval Operations in his memorandum of 5 February (see item). The Study Group noted that US policy in Laos was directed primarily at the development of that country, whereas Communist policy appeared to transcend national boundaries. The situation called for the application of US policy on an area basis, with provision for shifts of emphasis as opportunities for exploiting specific situations arose. Goals for each country in the area should be defined, and all political, economic, and military actions should be coordinated in a single effort towards achieving the over-all objective of a free Southeast Asia.

The Study Group concluded that US policy would be better directed if the objective in Laos was defined as recommended in the JSSC memorandum of 24 February (see item); that is, not merely a free and neutral Laos, but "a free and neutral Laos that denies to the communists a base or avenue for infiltration into South Vietnam, Thailand, and Cambodia."

On the matter of the necessity for planning alternative courses of military action for adoption if political means of reaching a Lao settlement failed, the Study Group went somewhat beyond the JSSC recommendation of 24 February. The planning should be undertaken, but if it became necessary for the United States or SEATO to act, the objective should be not merely to secure the Laotian approaches to neighboring countries but "to consolidate Laos under friendly control." This was the most feasible course of action for controlling the access routes, short of US action in North Viet Nam.

The Study Group was impressed by the relationship between their own replies to the CNO's questions and the JCS reassessment of US policy submitted to the Secretary of Defense on 5 January (see item). They recommended that the JCS reaffirm the views contained in that earlier memorandum and ascertain its current status.

The Study Group's answers to the CNO's questions included the following points. The United States should support a Souvanna government as long as it remained "truly neutral," despite the prospect that such a government would not have the means, and perhaps the will, to halt the Viet Cong infiltration into South Viet Nam. Short of eliminating the source of Viet Cong operations in North Viet Nam, the United States could only counter by increasing the tempo and extent of its existing actions

in South Viet Nam. If Communist pressure was directed through "neutral" Laos against Thailand, Burma, or Cambodia, the United States should increase its support to these countries and with regard to Thailand should assist "by all possible measures including a coordinated and full scale counterinsurgency program and, if necessary, the introduction of United States armed forces."

If indications developed that the Souvanna government was tending to align itself with the Communist Bloc, "the ultimate recourse would be to combine political and military action, including the movement of significant United States forces to mainland Southeast Asia. Such action would indicate United States willingness to enforce the provisions which established the neutral government." If alignment of the Souvanna government with the Communist Bloc became unmistakable and Phoumi or some other influential person broke away to form a separate government or army, the United States would have two choices. It could support "any United Nations or Geneva type action" for a negotiated settlement, accepting that this course might ultimately result in Communist domination of Laos. Or the United States could choose to support the anti-Communist faction in Laos, with as much assistance from allies as could be mustered. In the opinion of the Study Group, this should be "all-out support, to include the introduction of United States/SEATO combat troops with maximum air and logistic support. The objective would be the consolidation of all Laos." But if Phoumi contemplated such a break while the Souvanna government continued to maintain its "truly neutral" status, the United States must severely discourage him and remain faithful to its commitment to support the existing government.

The Study Group considered that SEATO provided the best basis for Free World unity and response against Communism in the area, but it had so far been unable to cope with Communist insurgency. "SEATO must be recast into an organization of action." The Study Group suggested a number of measures for strengthening SEATO militarily.

(On 20 March the JCS noted the report submitted by the Southeast Asia Study Group.)

(TS) JCS 2344/38, 9 Mar 62, and (TS) Dec On JCS 2344/38, 20 Mar 62; JMF 9155.2/3100 (2 Feb 62).

10 Mar 62

From the US Embassy in Bangkok, Counselor Unger reported the Thai reaction to the Rusk-Thanat communique (see item 6 March 1962), which had climaxed Thanat's visit to Washington. He also assessed the impact of Admiral Felt's visit to Bangkok (see items 5 and 6 March 1962).

Speaking of the joint communique, Prime Minister Sarit had declared that his government had for a long time sought this type of assurance. The Thai Defense Minister observed that, because of the confusion within SEATO, Thailand could not afford to await action by that organization if aggression should actually take place. SEATO Secretary General Pote, although he announced that the communique was merely a public declaration of previous US policy, informed Unger in a private conversation that the communique did tend to "downgrade SEATO."

According to Unger, the conversations in Washington and the resultant communique had allayed to a great

extent Thai fears that the need for unanimity would prevent SEATO from taking effective action in the event of Communist aggression against Thailand. The Thai press displayed "pleasure and relief" at the assurance of US aid. Unfortunately, these same press reports tended to imply that, as a result of the communique, SEATO was no longer important to Thailand's security. The Thai public was also heartened by Thanat's meeting with the President (see item 5 March 1962). Press reports underscored a statement by President Kennedy that the meeting had been most fruitful.

Admiral Felt, during his visit to Bangkok, had emphasized to Sarit the importance of SEATO, sought Sarit's help in dealing with Phoumi, and called upon Phoumi to show evidence of his willingness to cooperate with the US. The Admiral had also outlined US policy for SEATO Secretary General Pote.

In evaluating Sarit's reaction, Unger noted that the Prime Minister's customary expressions of distrust regarding Souvanna had been less forceful than usual. Phoumi, Unger continued, had given news of Felt's visit to the press, even though the meeting was to have been kept secret. Subsequent newspaper reports, based on statements by Phoumi, suggested that Phoumi had clarified the situation for Admiral Felt. The SEATO Secretary General had responded to the Admiral's presentation by calling attention to Phoumi's need of assurance that the US would not withdraw so fully from Laos as to be unable to aid him in resisting if the Communists attempted to overrun the country.

In general, Unger believed that Admiral Felt's visit had been helpful because it showed that US officials were "speaking with one voice regarding Laos" and gave further evidence of US concern for the security of Thailand.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1367, 10 Mar 62.

10 Mar 62 British Ambassador Addis met with Souphanouvong and Souvanna at Khang Khay. According to Addis, the mood of this exploratory meeting was "'not discouraging.'"

The discussion opened with a review by Ambassador Addis of US efforts toward a peaceful settlement. The Ambassador then stated that it was not yet possible to give a "definite reply" regarding Souvanna's most recent list (see item 5 March 1962), since consultations among the Allies were continuing.

Turning to the distribution of key posts, Ambassador Addis suggested giving Foreign Affairs and the lesser portfolio of Economy to the Pathet Lao, while retaining for Phoumi's faction the Ministries of Information and Finance. Souphanouvong, however, rejected this proposal. The Prince insisted that, though the lesser posts of Information, Education, Finance, and Economy and Planning might be divided between the

rightists and his own faction, it was essential for the key Ministries of Defense, Interior, and Foreign Affairs to remain in the hands of the center group. Addis replied that the division suggested by Souphanouvong had not been mentioned during the Geneva meeting of the three Princes and that, at any rate, it would be better to balance Foreign Affairs against Information. Addis described Souphanouvong's attitude toward this suggestion as "distinctly cool."

Souvanna then "remarked sharply" that, if no agreement could be reached, he would return to Paris. To hasten agreement, he suggested that Sports and Youth, which had been attached to Information in the hope of attracting Phoumi, should, for the same purpose, be shifted to some other Ministry such as Social Action. Souphanouvong was reported to have shown a "flicker of genuine interest" in this plan.

Ambassador Addis then turned to the second question of substance, the composition of the center group. In response to a suggestion by Addis that a member of the Sananikone family be included in the cabinet, Souphanouvong declared that either Ngon or Phoui would have to be considered rightists rather than members of the neutral center. Addis's recommendation that Nhouay be Minister of Education evoked silence but not hostility. The mention of Leuam Rajasombath and Khamking Souvanlasy brought no response from either Prince.

Souvanna then closed the meeting with the statement that he and his colleagues would need two or three days in which to consider the views expressed by Ambassador Addis. If Souphanouvong and the Western Powers could not agree within ten days, Souvanna intended to return to Paris.

According to Ambassador Addis, Phoumi Vongvichit had claimed during the meeting that the US was not really exerting pressure on Phoumi. Significantly, it was Souvanna who answered the charge by expressing confidence in Harriman and by stressing the need to provide a cabinet slate that the US could use in its efforts to persuade Phoumi.

In commenting upon the meeting, the Western Ambassadors agreed that it appeared possible that the key cabinet posts might be allocated along the following lines: Defense and Interior to Souvanna; Information to Souphanouvong; Social Action, Youth and Sports to Phoumi; Education and Foreign Affairs to the center; Finance to a rightist; and Economy and Planning to a member of the Pathet Lao. The Ambassadors also agreed that the outlook for improving the balance within the center between Vientiane and Xieng Khouang neutrals appeared obscure.

(See item 16 March 1962.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1271, 10 Mar 62.

10 Mar 62 The Counselor of the US Embassy in Vientiane informed the Secretary of State of certain economic and financial

measures that the RLG was planning to take in order to counteract the effect of the suspension of US financial assistance (see item 26 January 1962). These austerity measures, the Counselor continued, could not, in themselves, stave off economic and financial chaos for more than six months.

The basic financial measure was the monthly borrowing of 300 million kip from the Lao National Bank. Existing laws limiting the total amount thus borrowed would be either repealed or ignored. The inflationary impact of these loans was to be offset by reductions in government spending, increased taxes, controls on the salaries of government officials, and compulsory loans from merchants. The strength of the FAR also would be reduced in an effort to lessen government expenditures. Finally, the RLG would begin buying essential foodstuffs in an attempt to hold down prices, would gradually impose price controls, and might establish a system of food cooperatives for its employees.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1269, 10 Mar 62.

11 Mar 62

Both King Savang and Assembly President Somsanith criticized the US in speeches made at the closing session of the National Assembly. The King stated that the Lao people themselves could easily resolve the existing crisis, if domestic quarrels were not "stirred up by foreigners under various guises and even by certain of them who claim to be our friends." Next, the King complained that the US had suspended its aid, even though the RLG had kept faith concerning the terms of this assistance. Finally, the King expressed his confidence in the Boun Oum government and called upon the nation to unite behind it in its task of resolving the present crisis.

Somsanith, in his address, characterized the kingdom's plight as a "quarrel of foreigners in the way of whom Laotians have placed themselves." He criticized Souvanna and the NLHX for inviting Sino-Soviet interference and the US for using financial and economic pressure against the RLG. The RLG, Somsanith warned, might sever relations with those "friendly countries" that distrusted the Boun Oum government and refused to help it eliminate foreign interference.

(See item 16 March 1962.)

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1275, 11 Mar 62.

12 Mar 62

In a message that asked for comment or concurrence from the several Service headquarters in Washington, CINCPAC outlined a plan for the disposition of the US military personnel who would be affected by a withdrawal of the MAAG from Laos. Mobile Training Teams, Special Forces personnel, and others who were on temporary duty status would be returned to their parent commands. The permanently assigned military personnel of MAAG Laos would be dealt with under the following scheme: 1) CHMAAG Laos would obtain from the Service Departments the individual personnel data required for reassignment

action and would maintain rosters, updated at 15-day intervals until such time as the Lao situation was stabilized. 2) If time permitted, personnel would be reassigned by their own Service to new duty stations; otherwise, they would be attached to JUSMAG Thailand pending reassignment instructions. 3) Upon a decision to withdraw US military personnel from MAAG Laos, representatives of MAAG Laos, CHJUSMAG Thailand, CHMAAG Vietnam, and COMUSMACV would meet in Bangkok at the call of CHMAAG Laos; these representatives, using certain criteria listed by CINCPAC, would recommend some personnel for return to CONUS and others for utilization by JUSMAG Thailand, MAAG Vietnam, or USMACV, as well as some for retention by MAAG Laos or a successor unit with a newly defined mission.

(By 20 March all the Services had concurred in the above plan.)

(S) Msgs, CINCPAC to HQUSAF, et al., 122042Z Mar 62; CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, 290935Z Mar 62.

12 Mar 62 In accordance with a request from the Department of State, Ambassador Gavin in Paris approached Foreign Minister Couve de Murville with the suggestion that the French Ambassador in Laos, Falaize, be permitted "considerable latitude" in the current discussions on formation of a Lao cabinet. Specifically, Gavin inquired whether Couve de Murville would be prepared to accept Souphanouvong as Foreign Minister, should Falaize suggest this. The reply was non-committal, but Gavin did feel that US persuasion plus strong recommendations from Falaize might lead the French to accept this proposal. Their opposition, Gavin continued, appeared to be based on the previous Allied appraisal of the Foreign Ministry as a post of prime importance.

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4257, 12 Mar 62; (C) Msg, SecState to Paris, 4856, 11 Mar 62.

12 Mar 62 CHMAAG Laos reported that three MAP T-6 aircraft had been damaged beyond economical repair since 23 February, leaving only five available for close support operations. He requested that three replacement aircraft be provided as soon as possible, advising CINCPAC that Phoumi and the RLG air commander considered this requirement imperative to maintain the combat effectiveness of the FAR against the enemy's increasing armored vehicle capability.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, 120550Z Mar 62.

13 Mar 62 Thailand's Acting Foreign Minister requested the presence of Counselor Unger and handed him the text of Prime Minister Sarit's reply, dated 12 March, to President Kennedy's letter (see item 5 March 1962). Unger was assured that the reply represented a full endorsement of the recent US-Thai communique (see item 6 March 1962).

In his letter to the President, Sarit expressed his own appreciation for the President's message, the kind reception given Thanat, and the issuance of a joint communique that showed such concern for Thailand's progress as well as its security. The Prime Minister then conveyed the "heart-felt gratitude" of the Assembly, the

Government, and the Thai people for the assurance that the US would, in accordance with its constitutional processes, fulfill its SEATO obligations toward Thailand without waiting for unanimous agreement among the members of that organization. A similar feeling of gratitude had been aroused by the re-affirmation of US commitments to meet indirect aggression on the basis of the SEATO pact and in accordance with bilateral economic and military assistance agreements. Thailand, the Prime Minister continued, also welcomed the US intention to continue working closely with the Thai Government toward the economic and social advancement of the nation.

The communique, Sarit declared, represented a "significant milestone" in relations between the two nations. He then promised that Thailand would devote its energies to orderly development and progress as well as to the preservation of its heritage of freedom.

Unger and the Acting Foreign Minister discussed whether the exchange of letters should, as the US desired, be withheld from the public pending further developments in Laos. Release of the two messages, Unger pointed out, could be interpreted as a sign that the US had abandoned Laos. For that reason he urged that no public mention be made of the letters. When informed that Sarit had let slip to newsmen that he had cabled a letter to the President and that Sarit might be questioned by the Thai Assembly regarding this message, Unger recommended that the "less said the better." Thai officials assured him that Sarit's mention of the cable had been accidental.

After discussing the handling of the letters, Unger warned that "some progress on the Laos situation" was imperative. He expressed hope that Thanat had disclosed to Sarit the full extent of US concern over Laos. Unger then requested that, if there had been some "gap in communication," Sarit be fully informed before Unger's scheduled interview with the Premier later in the day (see item 13 March 1962).

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1385, 13 Mar 62; (LOU) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1388, 13 Mar 62.

13 Mar 62 Counselor Unger, at his own request, called upon Prime Minister Sarit in order to reveal the Rusk-Thanat communique (see item 6 March 1962), especially that portion in which the US and Thailand had expressed agreement on the necessity for the establishment of a free, independent, and truly neutral Laos. The Prime Minister's reply to President Kennedy (see items 5 and 13 March 1962), Unger observed, had contained no mention of Thai agreement with the US on this basic objective of US policy toward Laos.

As a result of this omission, Unger now asked if he could inform the US Government that Sarit endorsed not only this part of the communique but also the various aspects of US policy that had been explained to Thanat during the latter's visit to Washington (see items 2, 3, and 5 March 1962). The Prime Minister replied in the affirmative and added that he was in "full sympathy" and agreed "in principle" with the US position. Unger

considered this a clear endorsement not only of the statement contained in the communique but also of the US position as outlined more fully to Thanat.

After obtaining this assurance from Sarit (see item 16 March 1962 for a further statement of Thai policy), Unger called the Prime Minister's attention to Thanat's proposal that Harriman come to Bangkok for meetings with Sarit and Phoumi. Unger said that Harriman was willing to make the journey, provided that the visit seemed worth while. The Counselor then asked for Sarit's comments on the American concept of a worth-while meeting. Unger explained that Harriman would first outline the Lao situation for Sarit so that the two could agree on common action to convince Phoumi that he should enter into sincere negotiations. Next, Harriman and Sarit would meet with Phoumi and press him to confer with Souvanna regarding a coalition government. When Unger suggested that Harriman might arrive on 20 March, Sarit promptly agreed.

To avoid any misunderstanding on Sarit's part, Unger emphasized that the Prime Minister would be expected to join Harriman in exerting "real pressure" on Phoumi. Sarit warned that Phoumi might spurn his advice or stand firm against the Prime Minister's urging. Unger's remarks also elicited from Sarit some extended comments on the political situation in Laos, the King-and-councils formula, and the possible membership of a coalition cabinet.

That feature of the political scene upon which Sarit dwelt was the possibility of a split between Souphanouvong and Souvanna. In such circumstances, the Prime Minister advocated Phoumi's joining forces with Souvanna to eliminate the Pathet Lao. Unger, however, replied that, since the US was supporting the unification of Laos under a coalition in which all three factions were represented, American officials looked upon the possible split as an opportunity for Phoumi and Souvanna to build a political force capable of counter-balancing the Communists. The resumption of hostilities, Unger warned, would lead to a complete disaster for the Free World.

When Sarit turned to the King-and-councils plan, Unger noted the lack of any clear indication that King Savang was willing to take part, despite Phoumi's claim (see item 6 March 1962) that the King advocated this formula. Unger then reminded Sarit that President Kennedy had told Thanat (see item 5 March 1962) that there was not time to construct an alternative to Souvanna. The Thai Prime Minister abandoned the subject.

A discussion of the membership of a coalition cabinet followed, in which Sarit endorsed Phoumi Sananikone for a responsible post and emphasized the importance of finding a key position for Phoumi. The Prime Minister sought to "make sure Phoumi was not required to kneel before Souvanna in surrender." Souvanna, Unger replied, had indicated that he would not consider himself as victor and Phoumi as vanquished if a settlement were reached. Unger added that

Harriman was "most impatient," both because of his conviction that a prompt settlement was necessary and as a result of Phoumi's persistent refusal to face the issues.

Sarit thereupon asked if the US would support Phoumi if he did join a coalition. Unger replied that, since the US believed Phoumi could play an important role in any coalition, it certainly would support him, provided he did not embark on "separate adventures." Sarit then asked, assuming that Defense and Interior both went to Souvanna, if Phoumi might not serve as supreme commander of the Lao armed forces. In reply, Unger suggested that any such arrangement would have to be worked out between Phoumi and Souvanna as part of an agreement to insure the integrity of the FAR.

In commenting upon the interview, Unger reported that Sarit had ended the discussion by remarking that the sooner Harriman arrived the better. The Prime Minister had refrained from his usual sarcasm, and Unger believed that Sarit understood what he was expected to do during Harriman's visit. The Counselor predicted, however, that Harriman probably would have to review many of the points that had just been explained to the Prime Minister. In addition, Harriman might find it necessary to engage in a more specific discussion of the proposed cabinet.

(See items 22, 24, and 25 March 1962.)

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1391, 13 Mar 62.

15 Mar 62

CHMAAG Laos informed CINCPAC that US AID officials were considering the arrangements necessary in the event that a political settlement was reached under which MAAG Laos was abolished but US military aid to Laos continued. In response to AID Washington's request for an estimate, USOM Laos, with MAAG assistance, had concluded that under such circumstances USOM would require a minimum of 41 qualified civilians to oversee the aid program. In arriving at this figure, USOM had assumed that it would program and control MAP materiel deliveries and defense support funds and audit both MAP and defense support accounts. USOM would not perform any military training activities, except for programming off-shore training courses requested by the FAR.

CHMAAG thought that USOM's planning raised a fundamental issue regarding future US aid to the FAR: would the US continue to provide assistance without being permitted to administer and supervise it properly? Since the Geneva Agreement would preclude the use of US military personnel to perform this control, it appeared to CHMAAG that French or nonmilitary US agencies would be charged with administering a substantial US military aid project. CHMAAG doubted seriously that such an arrangement would be either efficient or effective.

(On 21 March, commenting to OSD(ISA) on CHMAAG's message, CINCPAC recommended that "under no . . . conditions" should French or nonmilitary US agencies be charged with the supervision of US military assistance to Laos. If

MAAG Laos was to be abolished while military assistance continued, CINCPAC believed "something similar to the former PEO [Programs Evaluation Office] structure" should be established so that US military personnel could continue to administer military aid. See item 27 April 1962.)

(C) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 211528, 15 Mar 62; ADMINO CINCPAC to OSD/ISA, 210047Z Mar 62.

16 Mar 62 The Thai Ambassador in Washington informed the Department of State that he had been instructed to deliver, along with Sarit's letter to President Kennedy (see item 13 March 1962), an oral assurance that the Thai Government fully agreed with the US on the need to achieve a free, independent, and truly neutral Laos and also was prepared to cooperate actively in obtaining a peaceful settlement of the Laotian crisis. Sarit, the Ambassador stated, would deliver a similar assurance to Harriman when the latter visited Bangkok.

Acting Secretary of State Ball informed the American Embassy at Bangkok that he would recommend that the President express appreciation for the "warm tone" of Sarit's letter and for the oral assurance given by the Thai Ambassador. He believed, however, that the President should continue to urge that the letters be withheld from publication until the Lao situation became clarified.

Secretary Ball added, for the information of the US Ambassador to Thailand, that this strong oral assurance should satisfy the US and give the Ambassador some leverage with Sarit if the Prime Minister should try to alter his position regarding a Laotian settlement. For the present, the Ambassador no longer need seek a supplemental letter from Sarit. If the Prime Minister, during Harriman's visit, adhered to the spirit of the assurance given to the President, no supplemental letter would be necessary.

(C) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1405, 16 Mar 62.

16 Mar 62 Ambassador Gavin informed the Secretary of State of an RLG demarche to the French Foreign Office. A Lao diplomat had inquired regarding French views on King Savang's speech of 11 March (see item) and had requested the French Government to publicly support the King's appeal for all Lao to rally round the Boun Oum government. The French spokesman avoided a direct reply, but he tacitly indicated the French view by expressing his surprise at "this new and unexpected development," which seemed to contradict the many attempts to form a coalition government under the mandate entrusted to Souvanna by the King.

The French felt this demarche to be merely the first of a series of misguided attempts by the Sisouk-Khampan Panya group of RLG politicians to gain French, US, and UK support, and therefore suggested an exchange of views regarding possible joint representations by the three Western Ambassadors to King Savang. The Foreign Office spokesman told a US Embassy official that the French had

been "holding their breath" regarding the King's speech, "hoping it would go away if everyone kept quiet."

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4335, 16 Mar 62.

16 Mar 62

Ambassador Addis again journeyed to Khang Khay, where Prince Souvanna informed him that further concessions or adjustments could not be made prior to a meeting of the three Princes. By bargaining now, Souvanna and Souphanouvong would surrender the flexibility of action necessary for successful negotiations with Boun Oum. Thus, Souvanna concluded, it would be useless, pending a meeting of the Princes, to continue discussions with the Western Ambassadors concerning the composition of a coalition government. Souvanna added that he would not invite Phoumi to such a meeting unless he was certain that Phoumi would accept.

In elaborating upon the future bargaining position of the two Princes, Souvanna stressed certain governing principles. After claiming for the center the key portfolios of Defense, Interior, and Foreign Affairs, he stated that the posts of Education, Finance, Information, and Planning should be divided between left and right, with each wing receiving one political and one technical ministry; the remaining positions should be divided equally among the wings.

Souphanouvong, in commenting upon Souvanna's statement of principles, assured Ambassador Addis that he claimed no particular post for himself or for his Pathet Lao adherents. In response to a question by Addis, Souphanouvong also indicated that he was ready to be "generous" regarding the composition of the center and willing to provide an attractive post, such as Youth and Sports combined with Social Action, for Phoumi.

During the discussion, Souvanna observed that the King, at the closing session of the National Assembly on 11 March (see item), had made a speech in which he congratulated the RLG for its efforts to solve the Lao problem but neglected to mention Souvanna's mandate to form a government. It seemed to Souvanna that the King had elected to support the Boun Oum government. Ambassador Addis replied by assuring Souvanna that the Western Ambassadors believed Souvanna's mandate remained valid. The King's speech had, after all, been written by the RLG. The British Ambassador then stated that the Western Ambassadors would question the King and, he was certain, would be informed that Souvanna remained responsible for the formation of a coalition government (see item 19 March 1962).

In commenting upon the meeting, Addis remarked that a "noticeable deterioration" had resulted from the King's failure to mention Souvanna. Indeed, the Prince apparently believed that he could do nothing until his mandate had been reaffirmed. Yet, both Souvanna and Souphanouvong believed they were capable of negotiating an agreement with Phoumi.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1298, 16 Mar 62.

16 Mar 62 The JCS forwarded to CINCPAC, for his comments, a proposed plan for the evacuation, upon their release, of US civilian and military personnel (an estimated 7 to 9 persons) currently held prisoner by rebel forces in Laos. The plan would be implemented by the Department of the Army (ACSI) in order to minimize the risk of compromising the cover plan of those prisoners who were in covert status at the time of their capture, and to prevent embarrassment to the US. It was assumed as most likely that the release of US prisoners would coincide with the culmination of negotiations for a coalition government in Laos. The plan provided for close control and prompt evacuation of all released personnel and gave particular attention to the control of press coverage.

(TS) JCS 2344/39, 17 Apr 62; JMF 9155.2/1410 (14 Mar 62).

16 Mar 62 CINCPAC advised the JCS of the urgency of obtaining the Thai Government's assent to the holding of SEATO Tactical Air Exercise AIR COBRA, scheduled to begin on 23 April. Since his planning recognized 23 March as the "go or no go" date for the exercise, CINCPAC requested that the Department of State be urged to press for Thai approval in the near future. CINCPAC recalled that his own discussion of the matter with Sarit had been unproductive (see item 5 March 1962) and that there appeared to be some concern within the State Department about the airdrops close to the Lao border that were part of the exercise. On the latter point he observed that few such drops were scheduled and that these could be omitted without detriment to the exercise.

(On 19 March, a memorandum by General Decker, as Acting Chairman, JCS, brought CINCPAC's request to the attention of the Secretary of Defense, but the Department of State took the desired action on that same day, as a direct result of the CINCPAC message of 16 March. Ambassador Young was instructed to pursue the matter of agreement on conducting AIR COBRA with the Thai Government, if Harriman, when he arrived in Bangkok, approved. The State Department saw a necessity for weighing the training benefits and the desirable emphasis AIR COBRA would give to the military side of SEATO against Thai reluctance to participate and the risk that the exercise might appear provocative if it occurred at a delicate stage in the negotiations on Laos. (See items 22 March and 23-28 April 1962.)

(S) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 162357Z Mar 62; SecState to Bangkok, 1410, 19 Mar 62; (S) JCS 2339/61, 21 Mar 62.

16, 18
Mar 62

On 16 March, another reinforcement of FAR forces at Nam Tha began with the arrival of leading elements of the 55th Parachute Battalion.

Two days later, on 18 March, the enemy resumed shelling the airfield, for the first time since late February, and continued to fire at frequent intervals over a two-hour period. An Air America C-46 was damaged, and the airfield was closed to operations. The

enemy weapon was estimated to be an 85-mm. gun, with a maximum range of almost twice the 8700 yards of the 120-mm. mortars previously employed in shelling the airfield.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 212514, 18 Mar 62; DA IN 212650, 19 Mar 62.

16-20
Mar 62

The US delegation received word on 16 March that the RLG delegation had been instructed by its government to leave Geneva. Attempts by Swezey, the acting head of the US delegation, to obtain clarification from RLG representatives were answered evasively, with some talk of the necessity to cut expenses.

Confirmation was received from Co-Chairman MacDonald, who reported on a conversation that day with Sopsaisana of the RLG delegation. The latter had stated that King Savang's speech (see item 11 March 1962) opened a new phase of the Lao problem; he had gone on to imply that the RLG therefore "saw no further point" in maintaining a delegation in Geneva. MacDonald disagreed very strongly, asserting that the Conference members expected the RLG "to live up to its commitments under the Zurich, Ban Hin Heup, and Geneva agreements, and would not understand the RLG going back on its word." MacDonald urged that, "at the very least," one member of the RLG delegation remain to maintain contacts.

In a discussion with Swezey on 17 March, Sopsaisana stated that, in the light of MacDonald's comments, he had advised the RLG to continue its representation at Geneva in abbreviated form. He said, however, that the RLG had not yet replied to his suggestion and implied that the departures of various RLG diplomats must therefore continue, although he hoped these could be "sufficiently fuzzed over to avoid the impression of a rupture." Swezey replied strongly that "nobody would be fooled by this for very long," that such a departure would undoubtedly create a highly unfavorable impression on the other delegations, especially since representation would continue for Souvanna and for the Pathet Lao.

Swezey informed the Department of State on 20 March that Sopsaisana's recommendation to the RLG apparently had taken effect, and that a Lao diplomat of lesser rank was therefore remaining in Geneva.

(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1136, 17 Mar 62; CONFE 1137, 20 Mar 62.

18 Mar 62

Phoumi informed the Western press that a major attack on Nam Tha had been in progress since the day before. Four Viet Minh, two Chinese, and two or three Pathet Lao battalions were alleged to be participating in the operation. Phoumi also claimed that Russian voices had been heard giving commands over the enemy radio net. If this attack continued for three or four days, the RLG would, according to Phoumi, consider the action a casus belli. (Ambassador Brown's information, from MAAG sources, was that firing on the airstrip had been resumed but that there was no evidence of a large-scale enemy attack.)

Phoumi did not consider the situation he had described as dangerous, however, since the FAR could "take care of" both the Viet Minh and the Pathet Lao. Phoumi doubted that large-scale Chinese Communist intervention in Laos was likely, since vigorous Chinese participation would be a serious matter for "other governments as well as for the RLG." He then stated that the Chinese Communists, having been denied the right to political participation in the Laotian settlement, were playing a military role. Phoumi did not clarify these apparently contradictory remarks about the Chinese role.

After outlining the military situation, Phoumi announced that the RLG would, on the following day, open diplomatic relations with South Korea. He expressed the hope that he could secure aid from the Philippines, Taiwan, and possibly South Korea, as well as from Thailand, whose Premier, Phoumi claimed, had assured him of future assistance.

Phoumi, moreover, did not believe that the US suspension of aid, which he termed a misunderstanding, was a serious matter, since the American policy had been announced orally and in the press rather than in a formal note from the US Government. The object of this US financial pressure was to gain acceptance of Souvanna as Prime Minister of a coalition government. The RLG, however, had not been convinced of the wisdom of a Souvanna government in spite of "very clever" American arguments.

Souvanna, Phoumi continued, had failed to form a coalition. The cabinet proposed by the Prince was not a good one, since the neutrals were "not only mediocre but Red." Thus, the only solution was the King-and-councils plan (see item 9 February 1962). Furthermore, Phoumi thought it very possible that Souphanouvong would not allow Souvanna to return to Paris (see item 10 March 1962), even though negotiations became stalled.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1303, 18 Mar 62.

19 Mar 62 Phoumi announced to Hasey of the American Embassy that he would not go to Bangkok to confer with Harriman. Instead, he planned to spend two or three days at Savannakhet in order to complete a religious ceremony. The RLG cabinet, Phoumi explained, had decided that he should not make the journey. Since he did not have the permission of his own Government, he could not negotiate with the representative of another state. The King, Phoumi continued, concurred in the cabinet's decision and would so inform Ambassador Brown at the audience scheduled for that afternoon (see item 19 March 1962).

Phoumi then requested that Harriman either come to Vientiane or send an emissary to that city. Hasey warned Phoumi that his refusal was a grave error and urged him to reconsider. When told that it was impossible for Harriman to visit Vientiane and unlikely that he would send an emissary, Phoumi suggested that any message for him from Harriman be transmitted through Ambassador Brown. Although Hasey told Phoumi that this suggestion would be a serious affront, the General merely asked that the US Government be informed of his refusal and said that, if

there were a message for him, he could be reached at Savannakhet.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1307, 19 Mar 62.

19 Mar 62 The Acting Secretary of State informed the US Ambassadors in Vientiane and Bangkok that "Phoumi's refusal to meet with Harriman, his remarks to press, his demarches to French and British, and withdrawal of RLG delegation to Geneva (see items 19, 18, 16, and 16-20 March 1962, respectively) indicate to us that Phoumi has thrown down the gauntlet." The Secretary instructed Ambassador Young to inform Sarit and General Wallop of Phoumi's abrupt change of attitude, seek the Thai Premier's interpretation of Phoumi's moves, and insist that Sarit make every effort to convince Phoumi to reconsider and meet with Harriman at Bangkok. The Ambassador should point out that Phoumi's refusal to confer with Harriman would amount to a break with the US. He might also inquire about Phoumi's intimation at the press conference that he had assurances of substantial Thai assistance.

Ambassador Brown was instructed to approach King Savang along the same lines, if feasible. The Secretary recognized that the lack of acceptable proposals on cabinet composition from Souvanna and Souphanouvong made it riskier for the US to undertake increased pressure against Phoumi. Hence he asked what plans Brown was developing for the formation of a united front with his Western colleagues to deal with Souvanna and Souphanouvong. In this connection, he noted, the British Foreign Office was strongly supporting the idea of a visit to Khang Khay by US officials Sullivan and Forrestal. It was assumed, the Secretary concluded, that the Embassy and MAAG were keeping close watch against military moves by Phoumi and that Ambassador Brown and his Country Team had prepared emergency plans for personnel protection and administrative measures in case Phoumi turned against the US or the US decided to take action against him.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1409, and Vientiane, 822, 19 Mar 62.

19 Mar 62 Ambassador Brown, in the course of an audience granted by King Savang, presented the monarch with a letter in which President Kennedy warned that the only alternative to agreement on a coalition government was the resumption of full-scale hostilities, "which might well result in the destruction of Laos as a nation." The King read the letter without comment. The Department of State had instructed the Ambassador to hold the letter in reserve for use, if necessary, in connection with the negotiations between the Western Ambassadors and Souvanna (see item 6 March 1962).

After presenting the Presidential letter, Ambassador Brown expressed US concern over the lack of progress toward a coalition government and over the RLG's apparent unwillingness to accept a government headed by Souvanna. The Ambassador then asked if the King's failure, in his address to the National Assembly, to mention Souvanna indicated that the Prince's mandate to form a new government had been withdrawn (see item 11 March 1962). The

King, after informing the Ambassador that according to Phoumi negotiations with Souvanna had not been officially terminated, stated that he had not withdrawn Souvanna's mandate. This royal mandate, King Savang continued, could not constitutionally be revoked, although Souvanna might voluntarily surrender it.

Next the Ambassador observed that Phoumi might be under the impression that the US would come to his aid in the event of hostilities. The King, Ambassador Brown continued, should know that the President had sent Admiral Felt to inform Phoumi that such an impression was false. The King, however, stated that Phoumi understood the situation and had no illusions of US military support. The King also agreed with Brown's statement that the RLG had so conducted itself that the world would blame it if the Pathet Lao should resume the offensive.

In spite of Phoumi's statement (see item 19 March 1962) that the King would inform Brown that the Bangkok meeting between Phoumi and Harriman would not be held, no such statement was made. The King did, however, repeat that he would not head a government of councils (see item 17 February 1962).

Ambassador Brown then noted that Phoumi was being told that "right-wing Congressional opinion in the US" might force the Kennedy Administration to reverse its policy toward Laos. Any such advice, the Ambassador warned, was not based on fact. The King replied that he realized that the President "was master of his own policy" and then launched a defense of Phoumi.

According to the King, Phoumi could not be blamed for all that the RLG was doing. Although Phoumi lacked political skill, he did have "much support," since he "represented a Lao idea, namely, anti-Communism." Removing Phoumi would cause the disintegration of the FAR and, in general, of the anti-Communist forces within the kingdom. When asked if he considered Phoumi indispensable, the King replied, "Under the circumstances, practically yes."

The King then repeated his complaints about corruption and inefficiency within the RLG and described the antagonism in Laos between the northern and southern provinces. Although he reported a "growing, active hatred of Souvanna," which would make a coalition impossible, the King also indicated that the effort to form a coalition should be continued and that he would support such a government if one was formed. The hatred, to which the King referred, allegedly stemmed from Souvanna's willingness to accept aid from, and to establish diplomatic relations with, Communist China.

The possibility of serious food shortages in Laos by October 1962 also was mentioned by the King. In this regard, he prophesied that friction between the Pathet Lao and the followers of Kong Le, primarily over food and supplies, would deprive Souvanna of his last measure of support.

The King also referred to the surrender to Communism implicit in the acceptance of a Souvanna government. Since he believed that either the acceptance of Souvanna or the resumption of hostilities would result in a Communist victory, the King often repeated sentiments to the effect that there was nothing he could do and that it would be better to die than to capitulate.

The main problem, the King continued, was Viet Minh influence in a neutral Laos. Ambassador Brown replied that the Geneva agreement was designed to diminish such outside influence, but King Savang dismissed the statement as "pure theory." The US Ambassador then pointed out that, although the US, by failing to support Phoumi, would encounter the risks posed by certain undesirable features of the Geneva agreement, to support Phoumi would cause renewed fighting and assure the total failure of the Geneva accords.

In commenting upon the audience, Ambassador Brown pointed out that the King "obviously considered himself a spectator" to events in Laos, events about which he could do nothing. The King, although admitting that Souvanna alone could head a coalition, nevertheless entertained reservations concerning both the ability of the Prince and the very idea of a coalition in which the Pathet Lao would participate. "We can expect no help from the King," Ambassador Brown concluded. "His sympathies are already with Phoumi."

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 682, 31 Jan 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1310, 19 Mar 62.

19 Mar 62 Ambassador Addis engaged in a brief conversation with Soviet Ambassador Abramov, who was en route to Khang Khay by way of Vientiane. The Soviet Ambassador accused the US of playing a "double game in Laos, with some Americans advising a peaceful solution and others advising obduracy." He stated that his Government believed that the US could so alter the situation in Laos that a solution would be possible. The time had come, Abramov concluded, for actions by the US rather than words.

The Soviets, Abramov continued, were inclined to "disinterest themselves in Laos." No early solution seemed likely, but perhaps some agreement could be reached after the rainy season. The Soviet diplomat did not threaten the resumption of hostilities.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1309, 19 Mar 62.

19 Mar 62 [REDACTED] the JCS reports of the arrival of one CARIBOU aircraft (an experimental 2-engine STOL aircraft under development for the Department of the Army) in Thailand for field tests in Laos, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] It was to be tested by landings on varied unimproved helio strips under various load, fuel, range, and altitude conditions. (See item 17 April 1962.)
[REDACTED]

20 Mar 62 In Bangkok, Ambassador Young spent nearly an hour discussing with Sarit, Thanat, and General Wallop the problem of Phoumi's refusal to confer with Harriman (see item 19 March 1962). As a result of this conversation, Sarit, who appeared frightened and concerned over the possible consequences of Phoumi's intransigence, directed General Wallop to go immediately to Savannakhet in order to press Phoumi to meet with Harriman at Bangkok or at some other acceptable site in Thailand. Both Sarit and Thanat repeatedly pledged to do everything possible to bring about talks between Phoumi and Harriman, to remove any lingering suspicion that Thailand was secretly supporting Phoumi, and to aid the US in arriving at a reasonable basis for compromise between Phoumi and Souvanna.

Sarit, insisting that he had no secrets from Ambassador Young regarding Laos, directed Thanat to reveal the contents of a telegram in which Phoumi repeated in essence the reasons he had given Hasey for refusing to confer with Harriman. Sarit then warned that Phoumi, though he would prove stubborn, should not be made to lose face, since the Lao General feared that his agreeing to meet Harriman might cost him the respect of his colleagues and of the King. Thanat added that the situation was very dangerous. Sarit, in response to Ambassador Young's comment that Phoumi was nearing a break with the US, said that the RLG's spurning of US support would be a disaster for both the Lao and Thai people.

Ambassador Young called Sarit's attention to the belief, shared by "many people" and nurtured by Phoumi, that Thailand was secretly encouraging the present policies of the RLG. Sarit thereupon "bellowed a vehement denial," stating that he had turned down Phoumi's every request for supplies and other aid. In reporting this, Young stated that he was inclined to believe Sarit.

As to the method of influencing Phoumi, the Thai leaders favored working through Lao cabinet members and military officers, who might persuade Phoumi that in reversing his stand he would lose neither the respect of his peers nor the support of the US.

In a private conversation with the Ambassador, General Wallop "guessed" that Sarit might go so far as to break completely with Phoumi if the latter refused to see Harriman or cooperate with the US at all. Sarit might tell Phoumi that "he was through with him and would not have anything more to do with him either officially or otherwise." General Wallop also confirmed Sarit's statement that he had refused Phoumi's request "to 'slip down' to Bangkok this week to see Sarit alone and with Secretary Harriman." (See item 22 March 1962.)

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1441, 20 Mar 62.

20 Mar 62 Assistant Secretary Harriman, at Hong Kong en route to his scheduled meeting with Sarit at Bangkok, informed the Secretary of State that, because of Phoumi's reported refusal to meet Harriman and Sarit (see item 19 March 1962),

it might be necessary to invoke limited military sanctions "to make him understand he cannot defy the US and expect continuing US support." In requesting authority to impose such sanctions at his own discretion, Harriman assured the Secretary of State that he would resort to military sanctions only in extreme circumstances.

Acting Secretary of State Ball on the same day replied that the President was reluctant to authorize military sanctions because the action could be used by Phoumi to create the impression that he had been "undercut by the US at a time when he could have held his own." Although the President was unwilling to apply sanctions until further efforts had been made to obtain Phoumi's cooperation, he would welcome further recommendations after Harriman had seen Sarit and after it had been determined whether or not Thai pressure had actually brought Phoumi to Bangkok (see item 20 March 1962).

The Secretary then repeated the President's desire that Harriman make it absolutely clear to Sarit and Phoumi that under existing "international circumstances," no matter which side might break the cease-fire, the President would be unable to intervene in support of Phoumi. No matter how the resumption of hostilities might come about, Secretary Ball continued, "the image here" would be that the fighting had resulted from Phoumi's intransigence.

In conclusion, Harriman was advised that the President considered it very important that Harriman talk with Phoumi, even if it were necessary to prolong his stay in Bangkok to do so.

(S) Msgs, Hong Kong to SecState, 1010, 20 Mar 62; SecState to Bangkok, 1424, 20 Mar 62.

21 Mar 62

The Acting Secretary of State informed Harriman in Bangkok that, given the apparent impossibility of getting Phoumi to come there, the President did not preclude Harriman's going to Vientiane to see Phoumi if necessary and in fact hoped that this might be arranged in a dignified manner satisfactory to Harriman. Such a visit would provide an opportunity for Harriman to meet the members of the RLG face-to-face. He might then be able to find a face-saving way out for Phoumi, and he could convince the entire RLG officialdom of the US determination to carry through the Souvanna solution. Therefore, if Harriman concurred, the Secretary suggested that both the Vientiane and Bangkok Embassies try to arrange for a formal RLG invitation to Harriman to visit Vientiane.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1428, and Vientiane, 825, 21 Mar 62.

21 Mar 62

The RLG Ambassador in Washington at his own request called upon Deputy Under Secretary of State U. Alexis Johnson. During their conversation, the Deputy Under Secretary reaffirmed "in plain terms" US policy on Laos by informing the Ambassador that, if hostilities were resumed, the US would not come to Phoumi's assistance. In response to a question by the Ambassador, Secretary Johnson also stated that US cash grants would continue to be suspended. Johnson emphasized the importance of Phoumi's negotiating

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in good faith and of his yielding to the center group the portfolios of Defense and Interior. The RLG Ambassador dwelt upon the belief of the RLG that US insistence on a Souvanna government would lead to the Communist domination of Laos.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 834, 23 Mar 62.

21 Mar 62 During a conference in Hawaii, the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman, JCS, the Chief of Staff, Army, CINCPAC, and others discussed the current situation in Laos and possible future courses of action there.

The Secretary of Defense, after being advised by PACOM Intelligence that the FAR capabilities had not increased relative to those of the enemy since the cease-fire (see item 16 February 1962), observed that the US appeared to have three alternative courses available in the future in Laos: 1) withdrawal of "all US personnel" from Laos and cessation of military assistance to the FAR; 2) "sitting tight" by maintaining the MAAG in Laos and continuing to support the FAR; or 3) introducing US combat forces, with or without SEATO participation or sanction.

Before discussion began on these alternatives, the Secretary asked the current capability of enemy forces to capture the major cities of northern and central Laos. The Secretary was unpleasantly surprised when PACOM Intelligence estimated that, with Viet Minh participation, the enemy could overrun these centers within 30 days. The only major problems that PACOM Intelligence saw the enemy encountering were Meo operations in the Plaine des Jarres and friction between Kong Le and Pathe Lao units. To these problems, CINCPAC added two: the weather, and the vulnerability of the enemy logistical complex to air attack. CINCPAC felt that, if US air strikes were authorized against an enemy offensive, that offensive could be "severely blocked" (presumably by an otherwise-unaided FAR).

Turning to the alternatives put forward by the Secretary, CINCPAC opined that the US should "wait it out," letting the Lao work out their own problems in their own way, while leaving the MAAG in place to support the FAR. If hostilities resumed, however, the US would have either to support the RLG or "give up Laos." CINCPAC felt that the US decision in this case should be to continue supporting the RLG by initiating a graduated response to the Communist attack. Questioned on these views by the Secretary, CINCPAC went on to say that the initial objective of any US military response should be support of the FAR in holding key cities. Later, operations could be expanded to include retaking the Plaine des Jarres and securing southern Laos. The US operations should not, however, encompass the recapture of Phong Saly and Sam Neua provinces, the original bailiwicks of the Pathet Lao.

The Chairman, JCS, then commented upon the alternatives presented by the Secretary. According to the Chairman, a showdown was approaching in Laos. The Chairman did not

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believe that the US Government was likely to change its policy to allow the introduction of US or SEATO forces into Laos; nor did he believe that a Lao coalition government would be formed. In these circumstances, the Chairman believed that the US should continue to support the FAR. The US should attempt to determine "the best situation we can get with Phoumi holding his ground"; even if Phoumi could only hold southern Laos, the US should support him in this endeavor. The Chairman hoped that the US would not take the irrevocable step of withdrawing the MAAG; he believed this would "hand the country over to the communists and have a devastating psychological effect on Thailand." The Chairman thought that Phoumi should regroup his forces in the South--particularly those forces he was currently massing at Nam Tha--and form a defensive line from just north of Thakhek eastward to just north of Tchepone.

The Secretary of Defense ended this discussion by stating that the basic issue at hand appeared to be whether or not to withdraw MAAG Laos. The Secretary said that he had heard enough to convince him that the MAAG should remain. In this conclusion, all conferees agreed.
(TS) JCS 2343/99, 27 Mar 62; JMF 9155.3/9105 (16 Dec 61) sec 4.

22 Mar 62 The Acting Secretary of State suggested to Harriman in Bangkok that during his prospective visit to Vientiane he might, in addition to his main task, pursue the limited objective of bringing about a resumption of negotiations among the three Princes. If resumed, such negotiations might "inch the two sides closer to agreement," or, at least, prevent deterioration by keeping the talking going. To bring this about, Harriman might try to convince Phoumi that he could not effectively fix blame on the other side for being unyielding until he had invited negotiations and carried them far enough to discover what sort of cabinet distribution and arrangements for the military establishment he actually could obtain.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1447, 22 Mar 62.

22 Mar 62 Ambassador Young reported that Thai Foreign Minister Thanat had indicated that Thailand had no objection to proceeding with SEATO Exercise AIR COBRA (see item 16 March and 23-28 April 1962). Harriman had approved the staging of the exercise, provided that no airdrops occurred in Thailand close to the Lao border and that publicity was kept to a minimum, with appropriate mention of the fact that AIR COBRA had been planned and scheduled for a long time.

(On the following day the Acting Secretary of State approved the exercise, subject to the provisions listed by Harriman.)

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1459, 22 Mar 62; SecState to Bangkok, 1461, 23 Mar 62.

22 Mar 62 Harriman and Ambassador Young, together with William H. Sullivan of Harriman's staff, called upon Premier Sarit and Foreign Minister Thanat to discuss means by which

Phoumi might be induced to cooperate with the US and Thailand in serious negotiations toward the formation of a Lao coalition. This meeting, during which Sarit reiterated his complete acceptance of US objectives, was necessary because of Phoumi's rejection of the earlier Thai attempt to win his cooperation (see item 20 March 1962).

Once again, the overture to Phoumi was entrusted to General Wallop, who initially was to propose that Phoumi come to Nong Khai (on the Thai side of the Mekong River near Vientiane), meet with Sarit and Harriman, and then escort Harriman to Vientiane for an audience with King Savang and subsequent discussions with Phoumi and the entire RLG cabinet. As a fall-back position, Wallop was authorized to propose that Harriman go to Vientiane for the royal audience, return with Phoumi to Nong Khai for a tripartite meeting with Sarit, then go again to Vientiane for conversations with Phoumi and the cabinet. Sarit was given the US view that, whichever proposal might be adopted, it was most important that Sarit and Harriman meet jointly with Phoumi "in order to avoid 'double-faced' tactics which Phoumi has pursued in the past." (See item 23 March 1962.)

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1460, 22 Mar 62.

22 Mar 62

[REDACTED] the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, JCS, a memorandum, "Reactions to Certain US Courses in Laos," together with a copy of the cable from White House assistant Michael Forrestal to which it responded. Forrestal, on the basis of his recent observations in Laos, believed it likely that the US would soon have to apply severe military sanctions against Phoumi. In anticipation of this, he suggested [REDACTED] might undertake two investigations, the first to evaluate the chances of renewed hostilities by the Pathet Lao after the suspension of US aid, and the second to ascertain what methods the US might employ to replace Phoumi with a new right-wing political figure during the confused period following the suspension of US aid.

[REDACTED] If the US were to withdraw its training teams, military advisers, and most importantly, its logistical support of the Lao Army, the Communists would be capable of rapidly defeating the RLG forces and seizing the major urban areas remaining under government control. [REDACTED] did not believe that the Communists would immediately attempt to capture Laos by military means since they would think their chances of success by political means had been greatly enhanced by the US withdrawal of support. Moreover, the USSR would wish to maintain the appearance of having negotiated in good faith for the creation of a coalition government. In any event, [REDACTED] the Communists would continue to maintain military pressure on Phoumi, increasing that pressure at times to improve their political leverage.

The assumed US course of action, the report continued, would have an immediate demoralizing effect upon the RLG and its armed forces; the government could survive at

most only three or four months without US support, and it was unlikely that Phoumi could hold the armed forces together for long. The Communists would probably wait for the RLG to collapse or for Phoumi and Boun Oum to accept Souvanna's terms for a coalition government.

in spite of these probabilities, the chances would be "less than even" that Phoumi and Boun Oum would agree to join a coalition under Souvanna. Even if they were to agree to participate in a coalition government, they would probably do so without any serious intent of cooperating with Souvanna, since both considered Souvanna a Communist tool. Rather, they would attempt to undercut Souvanna and his followers as well as the Pathet Lao.

four other courses of action open to Phoumi and Boun Oum, but found it impossible to estimate with confidence or precision the odds on any course. Their most likely choice would be self-imposed exile; both almost certainly had the means to support such a course, and they were probably at times weary and discouraged with the struggle. If their pride and determination outlawed this course of action, the RLG leaders might seek to bring about a partition of Laos or initiate some desperate military action. In either case there would be a sharp military reaction by the Communist forces, and Phoumi's troops would probably be defeated. It was also possible that Phoumi and Boun Oum would retire into the hills and seek to carry on a guerrilla war against any new Lao Government. this course of action was least likely to be implemented, since neither leader would relish such a life and they could not command the loyalties of many Lao troops for long without assured sources of maintenance and pay.

22, 29
Mar 62

In a 22 March cable, the Department of State questioned the Laos Country Team on its recommendations for a civic action program among the Kha tribesmen (see item 23 February 1962). While agreeing with the Country Team that the Kha should be helped economically and socially as well as trained militarily, the Department of State wanted more assurance that the projects could be completed without undue delay or danger of abandonment. Among the questions the Department asked were the following:

1. How long would it take to complete the recommended projects?
2. Assuming that MAAG Laos would be withdrawn and that AID Washington would be unable to provide personnel quickly, were the projects feasible or were they overly ambitious in terms of the number of US personnel that would be available in Laos?
3. What would the long-term AID/Laos personnel requirements be?

4. Would the Kha be capable of maintaining the projects after completion? If not, what would be the continuing costs to the US?

5. Would the locally hired technicians be Lao or third-country nationals? If Lao, could the RLG provide adequate personnel?

6. How would Lao civil authorities be brought into the program and responsible local self-government thus be promoted?

On 29 March, the Country Team replied to the State Department questions as follows:

1. The proposed projects would be completely self-sustaining by July 1964.

2. The projects were feasible, even with MAAG withdrawal and without immediate AID replacement personnel. During the time that MAAG Laos had responsibility for the program, a Civil Affairs Mobile Training Team (CAMTT), as requested by CHMAAG (see item 8 March 1962), would be necessary.

3. AID/Laos would need one project manager, third-country technicians, and replacements for the CAMTT, when and if it was withdrawn and for one AID public works engineer.

4. The Kha had only a limited capability to maintain the proposed projects; they would need technical assistance throughout the 27-month duration of the projects. The total cost, through completion of the projects, would be approximately \$186,000.

5. The locally hired technicians would be third-country nationals, probably Thai. The RLG would not provide the required technicians initially.

6. Since the Kha program was not necessarily tied to any particular regime in Laos, AID/Laos would strive over the next year to associate native civil authorities with the programs. Under the existing situation, however, the program must continue to be controlled primarily by the US, although the RLG had "given it full backing" (CHMAAG had justified this US control on the basis of Lao-Kha animosities; see item 8 March 1962).

The Country Team emphasized again (see item 23 February 1962) in its discussion of the program that time was of the essence. The success of MAAG [REDACTED] to form additional Kha ADCs depended upon US response to the economic needs of the Kha. Also, the monsoon season would begin in May and interfere with the construction projects upon which the progress in the other projects hinged.

The individual projects had been so designed that they could be terminated after six months with a net gain to the US and benefits to the Kha, the Country Team

continued. They were inseparable parts of the coordinated US program to consolidate anti-Communist forces on the Bolovens Plateau and, eventually, to interdict the "Ho Chi Minh trail." The US program did not have to be large, but it had to be timely. The program had suffered already because the US had not yet given evidence that it planned to initiate aid programs for the Kha who had taken up arms to clear the Pathet Lao from the area. MAAG Laos had detailed one officer as a part-time civic action coordinator to initiate those projects that did not require material assistance. This US officer, assisted to only a limited extent by one MTT, had been well received, but he could make only limited progress without technical and material assistance (see items 8 March, 6 April, and 4 May 1962).

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 827, 22 Mar 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1359, 29 Mar 62.

23 Mar 62

The Acting Secretary of State informed Harriman in Bangkok that the President had again considered Harriman's views on the imposition of military sanctions and had reaffirmed his conclusion that it would be unwise to cut off military supplies to the RLG at present, since the move would give Phoumi and others an opportunity to exploit false charges that the US had destroyed the freedom of Laos "at a time when, they claimed, Phoumi was still able to hold on" (see item 20 March 1962). The President did authorize Harriman to inform Phoumi that he was going to recommend to the US Government that military aid be suspended, if the talks with Phoumi took a course that convinced Harriman this was desirable.

Further, the President suggested the possibility that the high-level approaches being made to Phoumi by Harriman, Sarit, and others were feeding his ego in a way that was making him even less tractable. The President suggested for Harriman's consideration that the adoption of "an appearance of detachment" with respect to Phoumi might be more productive. What the President had in mind was that "Harriman could again make clear to Phoumi that he can have no basis for any belief that US would militarily intervene on his behalf, pointing out that during the past two weeks consultation with Congressional leadership had demonstrated that the Congress is strongly against any intervention in Laos, and that members of the JCS have recommended against such intervention." Phoumi should therefore be under no illusion whatever that any maneuvering on his part could draw the United States into hostilities in Laos. If Phoumi, realizing this US attitude, chose a policy that would bring ruin to Laos, the full responsibility would be his. The US would no longer "cajole or run after him."

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1451, 23 Mar 62.

23 Mar 62

Harriman forwarded to the Secretary of State General Wallop's report of his interview with Phoumi and an account of Hasey's subsequent discussion with Phoumi. Harriman concluded that Phoumi was "completely" defying the United States. Since Souvanna appeared ready to leave for Paris and no "alternative to Phoumi" had been developed, Harriman urgently

requested authority to bring specific pressure--military sanctions--to bear against Phoumi. These sanctions, he believed, might cause Souvanna to remain in Laos and also lead to the emergence of another leader whom the US could support in place of Phoumi.

The basis for Harriman's recommendation was the fact that Phoumi, after accepting Sarit's invitation to meet Harriman at Nong Khai and then escort him to Vientiane for conferences with the King and cabinet (see item 22 March 1962), had told Hasey that it must be understood that he was not yet ready to yield either the Defense or Interior portfolios. Also, Phoumi had falsely told Hasey that the invitation delivered by General Wallop was in Harriman's name rather than coming from Sarit. Although General Wallop had denied mentioning any specific proposals, Phoumi informed Hasey that Harriman was seeking acceptance of a troika, with representatives of the right, left, and center in the Ministries of both Defense and Interior.

Replying the same day, Acting Secretary of State Ball informed Harriman that the President did not feel he could modify the instructions he had just given (see previous item 23 March 1962). The President, however, was anxious to help in any way he could "below the level of military sanctions."

"We have searched here without success," Secretary Ball continued, "for actions we could authorize which would give you leverage to move Phoumi." In dealing with other members of the RLG, however, Harriman was empowered to "commit whatever funds of the type authorized for Phoumi you feel would be helpful under the circumstances."

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1462, 23 Mar 62; SecState to Vientiane, 829, and Bangkok, 1456, 23 Mar 62.

23 Mar 62 Secretary of State Rusk, in Geneva for the Disarmament Conference, discussed the Laotian question with Co-Chairman MacDonald. The latter offered his views on the personalities involved, Soviet attitudes, and certain problems that might arise.

MacDonald opened by stating that, although the agreement on Laos prepared by the Conference was virtually completed, Phoumi's stubbornness blocked all action. He described Phoumi as completely unreliable and said there were "serious questions as to his mental capacity to grasp the realities of the present situation in Laos." The problem was compounded, he observed, by the "passive, weathervane qualities of the King." Secretary Rusk added that King Savang was apparently unaware that his throne could be at stake. MacDonald also mentioned the danger that Souvanna's personal pessimism might lead him to give up his mandate in disgust, thus playing into the hands of the RLG.

MacDonald answered a question from Rusk concerning Soviet attitudes by saying that he believed the Soviets "now trusted the President and . . . Harriman" regarding US sincerity in seeking a coalition cabinet under Souvanna,

but they had occasional doubts, undoubtedly deriving from an inability to understand why US pressure had not yet brought Phoumi to heel, concerning the sincerity of US policy implementation. MacDonald was convinced that the Soviets wanted an agreement, that their rivalry with the Chinese Communists was an important factor in the Soviet attitude, and that, in general, they did not want to disturb conditions in Southeast Asia, and particularly in Laos. Secretary Rusk tacitly indicated his agreement with this analysis by describing as "significant" the fact that the Soviets had abstained from exploiting the bickering among the three Princes in December 1961. MacDonald cautioned, however, that "time was not necessarily on our side," since pressure from the Communist Chinese and North Vietnamese might eventually force the Soviets to change their policy, while Souvanna might become sufficiently discouraged to withdraw. MacDonald concluded by praising Harriman's "patience and skill," and stated that success would largely depend on his current mission to Bangkok.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1139, 24 Mar 62.

24 Mar 62

Harriman, with Thai Premier Sarit, Foreign Minister Thanat, and General Wallop, and US officials Sullivan, Forrestal, and Ambassador Young, met with Phoumi and General Bounleut at Nong Khai, Thailand. Harriman reported that "Sarit put the situation so squarely to Phoumi that I was able to support his position." Sarit told Phoumi he had the choice of being responsible for the military take-over of his country by the Pathet Lao or of working to help a Souvanna government maintain its independence, with the support of the United States, Thailand, and other friendly countries. Thanat then suggested that the Defense and Interior problem might be handled by a troika arrangement. Either the three top positions in each Ministry might be divided among the factions, or a three-man committee, one member from each faction, might head each of these key agencies. In addition, Phoumi was urged to have the RLG invite Souvanna to Vientiane, but Harriman emphasized that any such meeting would be useless unless Phoumi was prepared to negotiate in good faith regarding the portfolios of Defense and Interior.

Phoumi rejected the Thai and US arguments on the ground that Souvanna had failed to carry out the royal mandate to form a new government. He did, however, agree to consult his RLG colleagues regarding future negotiations, and he said he would not object to inviting Souvanna to come to Vientiane.

The three-hour discussion was followed by lunch, after which Phoumi escorted Harriman to Vientiane for an audience with the King and, on 25 March (see item), a meeting with the RLG cabinet. In Harriman's opinion, Sarit's staunch support of the US position was the only favorable development during the session.

The audience granted by King Savang, which Harriman dismissed as a "two-hour futile talk . . . hardly worth reporting," was even less productive than the meeting

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earlier in the day at Nong Khai. After stressing the world-wide support for US policy regarding Laos, Harriman declared that Phoumi, who dominated the RLG, was the sole obstruction to the attainment of a peaceful, independent, and neutral Laos that was unified under a coalition government headed by Souvanna.

King Savang thereupon came to the defense of Phoumi, who, according to the King, had impressive popular support as a "patriotic national leader fighting both the Communists and the traditional Viet Minh enemy." The King also referred to the possibility that Boun Oum might seek the partition of Laos and stated his own objections to any coalition in which the Pathet Lao were represented.

Regarding the suspension of US aid, the King declared that the US action had made "all Laotians feel that they are no longer independent." Harriman replied that the US, since it too was independent, could not allow a foreign leader such as Phoumi to dictate its policy. Thus, as the King acknowledged, the US was under no obligation to assist a foreign government of whose actions it disapproved.

Harriman then warned that Phoumi's intransigence could result in the loss of US support and, eventually, in the destruction of both the kingdom and the institution of the monarchy. The King, however, seemed resigned not only to the loss of US support but to the possible overthrow of the monarchy. Other dynasties, he observed, had also come to an end.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1325, 25 Mar 62; 1336, 26 Mar 62; Bangkok to SecState, 1477, 26 Mar 62.

25 Mar 62 Harriman and members of the US Country Team met at Vientiane with Boun Oum, Phoumi, and key members of the Lao cabinet. Phoumi, in opening the meeting, declared that the US and the RLG agreed on the need for a peaceful solution to the Lao crisis and on the necessity of forming a coalition government. The conflict between the two nations arose from differences of opinion regarding the suitability of Souvanna to serve as Prime Minister of the coalition. The RLG, Phoumi continued, did not think that Souvanna was suited to the task.

Sisouk, during a review of recent political developments, then claimed that the rightist faction had developed its current policies with the advice of the US and that the initial overthrow of Souvanna had been accomplished at the suggestion of the US, UK, and France. The RLG, Sisouk continued, could not understand the change in US policy whereby Souvanna had become acceptable. He asked whether the Soviet Union had given the US assurances of which the RLG was unaware. Ngon Sananikone followed with a brief explanation of the RLG's distrust of the Soviet Union and lack of confidence in Souvanna.

Harriman attempted to reply to the RLG in the spirit of President Kennedy's letter to King Savang (see item 19 March 1962). He noted that all the friends of the RLG,

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including Sarit, were urging the acceptance of Souvanna as the alternative to disaster. Since the King had refused to participate actively in a coalition government, there remained, indeed, no alternative except Souvanna. Harriman then touched upon the "flexibility" that remained in negotiations concerning the Ministries of Defense and Interior. He outlined the steps that would follow the formation of a coalition government and pointed out that these steps--the withdrawal of foreign troops, the integration of Lao forces, and the elections--would provide opportunities to judge Communist intentions. The US, moreover, would support the FAR until integration was completed. Economic aid also would be continued, but only within the framework of a coalition government.

Phoumi replied that the RLG could not accept Souvanna, for the Prince had failed to form a new government. Although the King might summon Souvanna to Vientiane to report on his efforts, serious negotiations toward a Souvanna-led coalition were out of the question. If the US should decide to abandon Laos, Phoumi added, this decision "would be most regrettable."

Harriman responded by warning the assembled cabinet members that they were assuming responsibility for the destruction of Laos and by advising them, "as a friend," to reconsider.

Although the meeting ended on this discordant note, Harriman remained hopeful that Sarit could influence the RLG to accept Souvanna and to negotiate in good faith.

(For the initial RLG reaction to Harriman's advice, see item 28 March 1962.)

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1478, 26 Mar 62.

- 25 Mar 62 Boun Oum transmitted a royal request that Souvanna come to Vientiane on the following day to meet Vincent Auriol, ex-President of France, who was visiting Vientiane to participate in ceremonies being held by the Lao Veterans' Association. Souvanna, on the following morning, declined the invitation because of ill health and stated that he intended to leave "very soon" for France in order to obtain medical treatment.
- (C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1328, 25 Mar 62; 1329, 26 Mar 62.
- 26 Mar 62 Harriman informed the Secretary of State that, subsequent to his own recent conversation with King Savang (see item 24 March 1962), French ex-President Vincent Auriol had been granted a royal audience. The King, though he covered much the same ground as he had with Harriman, "let the cat out of the bag" by stating that he believed the RLG would obtain greater US support if it faced the Communists directly instead of through a Souvanna coalition.

As Harriman and Auriol had previously agreed, Auriol urged the King to summon the Princes to his palace, keep them there until they had reached an agreement, and then summon the Western, and possibly the Soviet, Ambassadors to obtain from them firm assurance that the agreement

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would be honored. The King agreed that these tactics were worth considering.

Harriman later encouraged Auriol to repeat this advice if he should again call upon the King. Auriol might, if he deemed it useful, add that Harriman heartily endorsed the plan.

(S) Msg, Gangkok to SecState, 1477, 26 Mar 62.

26 Mar 62

The Counselor of the US Embassy in Vientiane, after conferring with the Western Ambassadors and with the Indian ICC representative, forwarded to the Secretary of State an estimate of the effects of the Harriman visit (see items 24 and 25 March 1962) and a series of steps that the Western diplomats believed would be useful in bringing about fruitful negotiations regarding the composition of a coalition government.

In assessing the effects of the Harriman visit, the diplomats concluded that the RLG had realized its error in rigidly opposing US policy. The basis for this estimate was the RLG's issuance, after Harriman's meeting with the cabinet, of a press release that was far milder in tone than the remarks of the cabinet members themselves. This statement had stressed that the main problem was control over Defense and Interior rather than the choice of Souvanna as Prime Minister. In addition, it seemed that Phoumi, in an effort to appease Harriman, had been most eager to take advantage of French ex-President Auriol's desire to see Souvanna.

Souvanna, however, had made a tactical error in rejecting the royal invitation to confer with Auriol. The Ambassadors doubted that Souvanna was seriously ill but believed instead that he merely wished to avoid bilateral discussions that might antagonize Souphanouvong and the Chinese Communists. Whatever his reasons, Souvanna's refusal would be interpreted by RLG propagandists as an insult to the King and as evidence of Souvanna's submission to the Communists.

After thus interpreting recent events, the Counselor set forth three steps that the Western diplomats had agreed would be useful in bringing about worthwhile negotiations:

1. A visit by Harriman to Thai Premier Sarit. Either Wallop or Thanat, it was hoped, would afterward continue to exert pressure on Phoumi as Sarit had previously directed (see item 22 March 1962).
2. A meeting between Sullivan and Sisouk, during which Sullivan, by contrasting the statements of the cabinet members with the official press release that had followed Harriman's visit, would seek to discover whether or not there was any possibility of further negotiations. If negotiations appeared possible, Sullivan would enter into discussions with Phoumi.
3. A visit by Addis to Khang Khay (see item 28 March 1962). The British Ambassador would inform

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Souvanna that: a) the Thai Government was assisting the US in its efforts to persuade Phoumi to negotiate; b) Harriman had engaged in unsatisfactory talks with the King and cabinet; c) Souvanna had erred in refusing to talk with Auriol at Vientiane; and d) Sullivan was prepared to journey to Khang Khay (see items 27-28 and 31 March 1962).

The Western diplomats, however, did not agree concerning the importance of Souvanna's remaining in Laos. The French Ambassador believed that, since the passing of time would see the weakening of the RLG position as a result of Thai influence and US financial pressure, a brief visit by Souvanna to Paris could do no harm, provided the Prince made it clear he had not surrendered his mandate to form a new government. The British Ambassador, on the other hand, considered Souvanna's departure to be extremely risky and desired that the Allies attempt to persuade the Prince to remain in Laos.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1333, 26 Mar 62.

27 Mar 62 The airlift of the FAR 55th Parachute Battalion to Nam Tha, which had been discontinued after 16 March because of the enemy's interdiction of the airfield, was resumed. Sporadic artillery and mortar fire continued, with one of the FAR 105-mm. howitzers and a 75-mm. howitzer being damaged in the exchange.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, 250840Z Mar 62; DA IN 214858, 26 Mar 62; 281210Z Mar 62.

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Sullivan, in a message to the Secretary of State, inquired if the Department had any comments on the instructions given him by Harriman regarding his forthcoming visit to Khang Khay (see item 31 March 1962). According to Harriman, the major purposes of Sullivan's visit were to attempt to dissuade Souvanna from abandoning the effort to form a new government and to do whatever was possible for the Americans being held prisoner by the Pathet Lao.

In addition, Sullivan asked the authority, if Souvanna should insist upon journeying to Paris, to renew the earlier invitation (see items 25 and 30 June 1961) that the Prince visit Washington. The US, UK, French, and Australian diplomatic missions in Vientiane had endorsed this proposal.

On 28 March, the Secretary of State provided Sullivan with instructions to supplement those already given him by Harriman. Sullivan's primary mission in going to Khang Khay was, as Harriman had indicated, "to encourage Souvanna to keep trying." Sullivan, however, was to rely on his own judgment and that of his colleagues in determining whether to urge a meeting of the three factions, or even a conference between Souvanna and Boun Oum or Phoumi. The desirability of any such meeting would depend upon Addis's reception at Khang Khay (see item 28 March 1962) and upon Phoumi's willingness to negotiate.

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Turning to the second point in Harriman's instructions, Secretary Rusk directed Sullivan to indicate to Souvanna and Souphanouvong, if such an approach seemed appropriate, that the release of the Americans held by the Pathet Lao "would have a favorable effect in the US" at a time when the Administration was "under attack by some US elements" for exerting pressure on Phoumi. If time permitted, Sullivan was to ask to visit the prisoners--Shore, McMorrow, Ballenger, and Wolfkill--who were believed to be on the Plaine des Jarres. Finally, Secretary Rusk instructed Sullivan to ask for assurances that Major Bailey was still alive, that the Pathet Lao would allow a Red Cross representative to interview him, and that the Pathet Lao would facilitate the exchange of mail with Bailey and with the other prisoners. (For an earlier discussion with Souvanna concerning the prisoners, see item 19 July 1961.)

The Secretary of State also approved the renewal of the earlier invitation to Souvanna for a visit to the United States. The renewed invitation would be issued in the name of the US Government and at Harriman's direction. Although exact details could be worked out later, Souvanna was to be told that he would be received by the President as well as the Secretary of State.

-(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1340, 27 Mar 62;
SecState to Vientiane, 845, 28 Mar 62.

28 Mar 62 The JSSC circulated to the Chairman, JCS, to the Director, Joint Staff, and to other interested parties a report by Major General J.S. Holtner of a field trip to Southeast Asia (see item 4-18 February 1962).

Regarding over-all strategy, General Holtner observed that Southeast Asia must be treated as an entity, whereas current US efforts appeared to emphasize individual country programs. Although the area was fragmented in every respect, the Communist effort, he reported, transcended national boundaries and took advantage of the fragmentation. The United States was beginning to do this also, by training the Meo, Kha and Montagnard tribesmen, but "one strategy for all would improve the situation tremendously," he suggested.

The visit had modified General Holtner's previous assumption that "the terrain, logistics and communications of the area would make significant US military operations extremely hazardous." The terrain appeared difficult but not impossible; logistical facilities and communications were rapidly improving.

He found strategic intelligence, country by country, reasonably good, but no effort to collate it area-wide could be discerned. Tactical intelligence, on the other hand, was practically nonexistent, particularly in South Viet Nam, and until it could be developed and rapidly evaluated, success in operations would depend more on chance than on design.

Turning to Laos, General Holtner observed that the Communists had been more foresighted than the United States

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in recognizing that Laos was the strategic key to the entire area. He doubted that any coalition government would be able, even if it had the will, to stop Communist infiltration of other countries through Laos. Instead of exerting pressure on Phoumi to give way on the formation of a coalition government, it would be better as an interim solution to attempt to maintain the status quo, so as to give the United States freedom of action in the future. Meanwhile the FAR could continue to improve its capabilities. If the Communists sincerely desired a "truly neutral" coalition government, it should be their responsibility to exert pressure on Souvanna for compromises leading to a solution. The past history of the area convinced General Holtoner, however, that the Communists were not sincere.

The individual FAR soldier was a better fighter, according to General Holtoner, than State Department reports had made him out to be. General Boyle and his MAAG officers held the same view, but Ambassador Brown did not. The USMC representative on the field trip likewise did not share the opinion that the FAR could be developed into an effective fighting force.

The basic problem was inadequate leadership, General Holtoner continued. Poor leadership had hurt the operations in northwest Laos, particularly at Nam Tha, and as a result the regional commander had relieved three Group Mobile commanders. General Holtoner expressed particular concern about the FAR's defensive attitude and willingness to leave the initiative to the enemy. MAAG, through the White Star teams, was making every effort to instill an offensive spirit in the FAR forces. In the Nam Tha operation, General Holtoner continued, a Pathet Lao 120-mm. mortar, which continually interdicted the airfield, seemed to be the major element in turning the balance in favor of the enemy. The FAR forces could easily eliminate the mortar if they were authorized to conduct air operations.

General Holtoner reported that, contrary to official reports, the FAR "almost always" brought out their individual weapons when they were forced to withdraw. Although "in most instances" they abandoned crew-served weapons, they were being trained to render them inoperable by removing some major component.

Emphasizing the importance of training tribal fighters, such as the Meo and Kha, General Holtoner reported that one White Star base in the Bolovens Plateau had trained 100 Kha tribesmen, who were engaging in patrol operations; 200 more were being trained there. He agreed with General Boyle's recommendation that the number be increased to 1200 (see item 25 January 1962), because of the importance of the Bolovens Plateau to US contingency plans. General Boyle, in a briefing reported by the US Army member of the party, had stated that Meo tribesmen would move anywhere in Laos if they were assured that their families would be protected and cared for.

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Among other points stressed by General Boyle in his briefing were: 1) Villagers were not interested in "a specific form of government" so long as they were left alone. 2) The FAR should be increased to a strength of 68,000 through recruitment by local commanders. 3) The French should have no military responsibility in Laos; the lack of FAR officers with command and staff competence was the result of French policy not to train the FAR forces. 4) Filipino technicians, of whom more than 400 were employed by MAAG, were extremely valuable. A further point, noted by the Army representative in the course of a briefing by US Special Forces personnel, was the urgent need for a good jungle boot.

While in Thailand, the party was informed that approximately 95 per cent of the 30-day reserve stocks being accumulated for Laos in Thailand (Project SALT SHAKER) was already in storage. Out of a total of 6,857 FAR personnel scheduled to receive training in Thailand, 4,226 had completed their training and 688 were in mid-course. Project EKARAD (a training program for 8 infantry battalions, 6 artillery batteries, and 1000 recruits) accounted for most of the total. In addition, Thailand had assisted by providing for duty in Laos 400 artillery, interpreter and specialist personnel of the Thai armed forces.

(TS) Chairman, Southeast Asia Study Group, "Report of Field Trip to Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Thailand and Laos), 4-18 February 1962," JMF 9150/5420 (4 Feb 62).

28 Mar 62

CINCPAC directed CHMAAG Laos to extend his existing planning for the withdrawal of personnel and equipment from Laos (see item 2 March 1962) by adding a plan for the contingency that the MAAG, following its withdrawal, might be ordered to return and quickly reestablish operations in Laos owing to deteriorating conditions there. When the foreign military forces withdrew from Laos, CINCPAC said, the disparate elements joined in the reconstituted FAR might drift apart, mutinies take place, and coups be attempted. Both the US and the Communists might then decide to re-enter Laos hurriedly and resume the support and control of their respective cohorts. CHMAAG should therefore plan, in coordination with CHJUSMAG Thailand, to establish in Thailand a cadre of MAAG Laos personnel and equipment, prepared to return to Laos and re-establish the MAAG in the shortest possible time. (See item 4 May 1962.)

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 280002Z Mar 62.

28 Mar 62

The US Military Attache at Vientiane, during a party held by Phoumi, discussed the Harriman visit (see items 24 and 25 March 1962) with members of the RLG, Thai and Vietnamese diplomats, and general officers of the FAR. The consensus of opinion was that the cabinet officers, as a result of Harriman's accusation that they were leading the kingdom to its destruction, had suffered such a severe loss of face that they had no choice but "to stand fast and unite against their accuser." In the opinion of USARMA, the attitude of RLG officials had changed from disagreement with and resentment of US policies to distrust and anger. There was, however, no

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doubt that the US could force the RLG from power. The question, according to USARMA, was whether the result would "best serve either the US or the free world in general."

(S) Msg, USARMA Laos to DA, DA IN 216390, 30 Mar 62.

28 Mar 62

During a visit to Khang Khay, Ambassador Addis informed Souvanna of recent developments, including Sullivan's readiness to come to Khang Khay. Souvanna said that Sullivan would be welcome, but Souphanouvong, though willing to see the US diplomat, did not seem enthusiastic about the proposed visit.

Souvanna then declared that, although his health had improved, he definitely would leave for Paris on 3 April. Both Souvanna and Souphanouvong agreed that two or three months would pass before Phoumi began to feel the effects of US pressures. Thus, there was no possibility of Phoumi's giving in at this time and, consequently, no reason for Souvanna to postpone his journey to France. Souvanna indicated, however, that he would be prepared to return to Laos "at the appropriate time." Both Souvanna and Souphanouvong insisted that their goal was the formation of a coalition government in which Phoumi would participate.

Addis then pointed out that Souvanna's departure from Laos could result in the deterioration of the military and political situation. In the military sphere, US pressure would cause a gradual weakening of the FAR, thus creating a situation of which the Pathet Lao might be tempted to take advantage. In the political sphere, Souvanna's absence would leave a vacuum that some other individual might seek to fill. Souvanna, however, gave "firm assurances" that the Pathet Lao would be restrained and stated that he would, by means of various public statements, "put his departure in the proper political framework." The Prince emphasized that he had no intention of renouncing his mandate to form a new government.

In response to Addis' suggestion that he call a meeting of the three Princes at Luang Prabang, Souvanna maintained that there was no point in such a meeting at this time. He was, moreover, concerned for his personal safety in Luang Prabang, since he believed that Phoumi, goaded by US pressure, might have become desperate. Thus, Souvanna also declined to visit the King, although he was willing to render a written report of his progress toward a coalition. Unlike Souvanna, Souphanouvong seemed interested in a meeting of the Princes.

Souphanouvong replied to Addis' questions concerning the military situation by declaring that he had no intention of attacking. He did, however, accuse Phoumi of provocations, especially at Nam Tha. According to Souphanouvong, the FAR had massed 52 companies at Nam Tha (the MAAG estimate was 28) and had engaged in parachuting

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both men and supplies. If Phoumi persisted in such actions, Souphanouvong warned, "we will give him a coup de matraque." After thus threatening to bludgeon Phoumi, Souphanouvong agreed that provocations should be avoided and then declared that the Pathet Lao, whatever Phoumi might do, did not intend to capture such "important places" as Nam Tha, Luang Prabang, Thakhek Vientiane. Addis, however, considered Souphanouvong's remarks on the military situation to be the most unsatisfactory aspect of the visit.

Before leaving Khang Khay, Addis informed Soviet Ambassador Abramov of what the two Princes had said and emphasized the need to take precautions lest the situation, particularly the existing military stalemate, should deteriorate in Souvanna's absence. Addis reported that Abramov's attitude had been "receptive."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1355, 29 Mar 62.

29 Mar 62 According to the report of Ambassador Bruce, the British Foreign Office saw it as "abundantly clear" that Phoumi had no intention of agreeing to a government led by Souvanna. Noting that the Soviets seemed disposed to let the situation simmer along, the Foreign Office suggested that the Pathet Lao might be content to consolidate their control in areas currently held rather than initiate new attacks. The British saw real danger in the possibility that Phoumi might try to spark a resumption of hostilities. If he provoked the Pathet Lao, Phoumi might well suffer a swift defeat that would leave three-fourths of Laos under PL control. No possibility was seen of change in the situation through repudiation of Phoumi by his Vientiane followers. The Foreign Office had "toyed with the idea" of de-recognition of the Phoumi-Boun Oum group in favor of some sort of government to be established in Luang Prabang under Souvanna, but discussion had revealed "many absolute obstacles," including the King's opposition to Souvanna.

The Foreign Office expected to maintain the British Co-Chairman, MacDonald, in Geneva in order to preserve the existing machinery and hold open the possibility of reassembly of the Conference or reaffirmation of the cease-fire should the need arise. MacDonald had recently sent a personal letter to Souvanna asking him to remain in Laos. In the British view, however, it was likely that Souvanna would soon depart for Paris and that it might be difficult to get him to return. Commenting that this was the first time in some months that Foreign Office spokesmen had been unable to propose at least a theoretical way out of the Laotian imbroglio, Ambassador Bruce noted that they were anxiously awaiting any hopeful ideas that Harriman might have developed during his visits to Laos and Thailand.

(Instructions sent by the State Department on 31 March advised the Ambassador that the most important aspect of the Harriman visits had been the avowed readiness of the Thai leadership to attempt to induce Phoumi to enter into effective negotiations.)

(C) Msgs, London to SecState, 3581, 29 Mar 62; SecState to London, 5245, 31 Mar 62.

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30 Mar 62 CHMAAG Laos published MAAG Laos OPLAN 63-62, setting forth procedures for the withdrawal of the MAAG. Consistent with the guidance set forth by the JCS and CINCPAC (see items 14 February and 2 March 1962), OPLAN 63-62 provided for a "phased and orderly withdrawal" of US military and third-country civilian personnel of the MAAG upon the formation of a Lao government of national unity and for the recovery of both US-owned equipment and MAP equipment that was excess to the needs of remaining US agencies and the new Lao Army. The OPLAN anticipated four phases of withdrawal operations: warning, assembly and withdrawal, operations in Thailand, and phase-out. It also planned for such actions as: 1) continuing FAR training programs to the extent possible; 2) evacuation of Thai volunteers in Laos; and 3) evacuation, after approval by the US Embassy, of Lao individuals.

(S) MAAG Laos OPLAN 63-62, 30 Mar 62; OSD(ISA), FER/SEA Br. Files.

30 Mar 62 Sullivan informed the Secretary of State that Ambassador Young, in arranging for Sullivan's passage through Thailand en route to Khang Khay, had requested that he return by way of Bangkok and reported on his visit (see item 31 March 1962). Sullivan had expressed his willingness to honor Young's request and, if desired, to brief officials of the Thai Government.

Secretary Rusk replied with full approval of Sullivan's undertaking to brief the Thai officials. Although the US was willing to await the result of Sarit's efforts to persuade Phoumi (see items 20 and 22 March 1962), the Secretary did not believe that time was "working in our favor at Xieng Khouang." For this reason, Sullivan was to ask "politely" for a schedule of these Thai efforts. General Wallop, Secretary Rusk noted, had indicated that he would not make another approach until he had more information on developments within the RLG. Since the Thai understood the Lao psychology better than did the Americans, Sullivan was not to exert undue pressure, but the Secretary nevertheless believed that the US should know Sarit's plans.

"Highest authority," Secretary Rusk continued, was again proposing that the US temporarily turn a "cold shoulder" to Phoumi (see item 23 March 1962). Such treatment, Rusk said, could include any or all of the following: 1) the recall of Hasey; 2) the relief, without replacement, of General Boyle; and 3) the recall of Ambassador Brown for consultations. Ambassador Young, Sullivan was advised, might find it desirable to obtain the advice of Thai officials on these measures.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1360, 30 Mar 62; SecState to Bangkok, 1496, 30 Mar 62.

30 Mar 62 CHMAAG Laos informed CINCPAC that Phoumi, in a further reorganization of the FAR (see item 19 January 1962), planned to place the Surface Defense Command (DS) under the National Security Forces Command (FSN), and to move DS headquarters from Savannakhet to Vientiane. According

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to Phoumi, his original plan to prepare a bastion in the South had been overtaken by events (particularly at Nam Tha, which "must be held at all cost"), and he was now making Vientiane the "center of major headquarters and activities." According to CHMAAG Laos, there were at least two other possible reasons for this move: 1) CHMAAG had long urged it as an organizational improvement; and 2) Phoumi might simply wish to obtain better personal control over his headquarters and commanders. CHMAAG also observed that Phoumi's professed abandonment of "moving South" would in no way prevent his actually performing such a move if he should find it expedient to do so.

(C) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 216994, 30 Mar 62.

31 Mar 62 Sullivan reported to the Secretary of State concerning various aspects of his two-day visit to Khang Khay. The Deputy Chief of the US Delegation to the Geneva Conference had been unable either to see the Americans held prisoner by the Pathet Lao or to gain acceptance by Souvanna of an invitation to visit the US (see item 27, 28 March 1962). He had, however, received Souphanouvong's promise to look after the prisoners.

The "only encouraging result" reported by Sullivan was the "considerable consensus" in favor of a troika arrangement for Defense and Interior. Souvanna, after first demanding personal control over the Ministries with a troika at the Secretaries-of-State level, agreed that, during the period when plans for an integrated army and for local administration were being formulated, a three-man council could control both Ministries. This council would consist of Souvanna, Souphanouvong, and Phoumi. After completion of the planning phase, responsibility would revert to Souvanna, who would serve as Minister of Defense and of Interior, as well as Prime Minister. Souphanouvong, however, refused to commit himself, stating instead that certain details would have to be worked out at a meeting of the Princes.

Sullivan believed that Souvanna might propose discussions among representatives of the three factions. These talks could provide Phoumi with a means of agreeing, without loss of face, to a meeting of the Princes at which he presumably would yield the Defense and Interior portfolios to Souvanna in return for a place in the proposed troika. Souphanouvong, unlike Souvanna, appeared to have no interest in Phoumi's saving face.

Although the "general attitude of all hands" at Khang Khay was that the US should exert pressure against Phoumi by applying military sanctions, Souphanouvong was the "most violent exponent of this thesis." Whereas Souvanna merely suggested the withdrawal of MAAG teams from FAR units and Abramov was willing to leave the details to the US, Souphanouvong insisted upon the immediate termination of all US military aid.

Sullivan asked for assurances that the Pathet Lao and the forces of Kong Le would not exploit the situation that would result from the application of military sanctions against Phoumi. Souvanna replied that Kong Le's troops definitely would not attack, and Abramov estimated that the situation would remain quiet for two or three months, but Souphanouvong used the occasion to denounce Phoumi for allegedly augmenting FAR forces in areas to which the Pathet Lao laid claim. Souphanouvong's threat to capture such places as Muong Houn and Ban Hat, which he alleged had been in the hands of the Pathet Lao when the cease-fire went into effect, triggered two "long and rather explosive arguments" with Sullivan. In spite of these differences, Souphanouvong presented the "picture of solicitude and charm" as the visit drew to a close.

When Souvanna, during one of these arguments, suggested that the Pathet Lao would seize these objectives "only if Phoumi used them offensively," Souphanouvong contradicted him, and Souvanna "stalked from the room." Sullivan, unable to obtain assurance that the Pathet Lao would not exploit the future weakness of the FAR, declared that he was unable to assess with any confidence Souphanouvong's intentions.

Souvanna, in a private conversation, told Sullivan that Souphanouvong mistrusted Phoumi, did not understand political affairs, and permitted himself to become overly excited about military matters. The US diplomat, however, assessed Souphanouvong quite differently. "In my own judgment," Sullivan reported, "Souphanouvong understands political affairs very well, but is a cocky little scrapper who smells victory."

Sullivan returned to Vientiane with an unsealed letter in which Souvanna told the French Ambassador that he was about to leave for Paris and that, for the present, all that could be done toward a solution was to induce Phoumi to yield the Defense and Interior portfolios and to accept a tripartite meeting to discuss the formation of a coalition government. In the meantime, the letter continued, Souvanna would await in Paris the results of US pressure on the RLG.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1372, 1373, 31 Mar 62; (C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1375, 1377, 1 Apr 62.

31 Mar 62

CINCPAC cautioned PACOM commanders that, notwithstanding recent news reports discounting the possibility of renewal of major offensives by either side in Laos, his opinion was that the situation continued to be "explosive." He cited particularly the report of the belligerent attitude displayed by Souphanouvong in a conversation with British Ambassador Addis on 28 March (see item). It was CINCPAC's opinion that Souphanouvong could at any time use any provocation by the RLG as an excuse for a major attack and that Phoumi also could initiate offensive

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operations "on his own." CINCPAC reminded the subordinate commanders that he had assured higher authorities that PACOM was maintaining a 96-hour readiness posture for CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59 (Phase II-Laos/Viet Nam) and SEATO Field Forces OPLAN 5-61.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to COMFIRSTMAW, et al., 312024Z Mar 62.

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1 Apr 62

At Nam Tha, the intermittent shelling of the airfield delayed the arrival of final elements of the 55th Parachute Battalion. In other respects the tactical situation remained unchanged.

A FAR task force, composed of the 3d Infantry Battalion and elements of the 15th Volunteer Battalion, was attacked and routed at Muong Houn in the Nam Beng Valley by an unidentified enemy force of battalion size. The FAR troops withdrew, leaving the town to the enemy. (Nearly two weeks later, on 12 April, major elements of the FAR force were still dispersed and some of them unlocated. The flight did not stop until the Mekong River was reached.)

In central Laos the FAR also encountered a setback in the vicinity of Tha Thom. A counterattack met with limited success.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, 301045Z Mar 62; 011015Z Apr 62; 041015Z Apr 62; 120945Z Apr 62; 171000Z Apr 62; (TS-NOFORN) J-3, Southeast Asia Sitrep 14-62, 5 Apr 62.

2 Apr 62

The Counselor of the US Embassy in Vientiane inquired of the French Ambassador concerning any impressions of political significance or any concrete results that might have emerged from ex-President Auriol's stay in Vientiane (see items 25 and 26 March 1962). According to the Ambassador, although Auriol's advice would be seriously considered, his approaches did not cause the King or the RLG to alter their positions.

In his conversation with King Savang, Auriol had advised the monarch that the Lao people should solve their nation's domestic problems and that mediation among the political factions was a royal responsibility. The King's response to this advice was "a succession of contradictory statements," which led Auriol to believe that the Lao monarch, though disturbed by Harriman's warning of the danger to his throne, was most annoyed by the suspension of US aid. When the King repeated his complaint that the suspension of cash grants because of a conflict in policy had made the Lao feel that they were not independent, Auriol observed that, by this standard, the Lao people would not feel independent until all outside aid had been ended.

Auriol did, however, succeed in eliciting a royal invitation calling upon Souvanna to visit Vientiane. According to the French Ambassador, Auriol had expected genuine results from this invitation and had been disappointed by Souvanna's refusal.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1386, 2 Apr 62.

2 Apr 62

Ambassador Gavin relayed a report from the French Foreign Office that Ambassador Falaize had been approached by Sisouk of the RLG concerning the dispatch of a RLG mission to Europe to seek aid as a substitute for that cut off by the United States. Although West

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Germany was the principal target, Sisouk clearly was interested in sounding out the French as well. Falaize, however, remained noncommittal. The French considered the entire approach in keeping with their view of Sisouk as "completely unattuned to international realities."

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4652, 2 Apr 62.

3 Apr 62

Souvanna left Khang Khay for Paris. In what the US Embassy termed an "unhelpful departure statement," he expressed regret that his efforts so far had failed to create a coalition government and charged that "the ill will" and constant opposition of the RLG had brought this about. Souvanna then rejected Phoumi's plan for a government of six councils headed by the King (see items 25 January and 17 February 1962). The King, Souvanna explained, was venerated by the people and therefore should not be drawn into politics.

Souvanna called upon the United States to urge the RLG to agree to a tripartite meeting so that a coalition government might rapidly be formed. To demonstrate to the world its sincere desire for a peaceful settlement, the US Government would have to withdraw its military support from Phoumi and Boun Oum. Souvanna's forces, the statement continued, would not "seek to profit from this withdrawal of military aid to attack the Savannakhet troops except when the latter encroach upon the zones controlled by our forces."

Souvanna said he was going to Paris to see his family and to seek medical care. He cautioned his followers to beware, during his absence, of "the enemy that is seeking to sow discord among us . . . and between us and the [NLHX]." "If we are vigilant and strongly united, we shall without the slightest doubt win in the end."

(OUO) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1385, 2 Apr 62;
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1394, 4 Apr 62.

3 Apr 62

Phoumi granted an interview to Sullivan, who had just returned from Khang Khay, and Creel of the US Embassy. Sullivan, although he avoided mention of the invitation to Souvanna to visit the US, provided Phoumi with a "fairly complete rundown" on his recent visit to Khang Khay (see item 31 March 1962). In reply to Phoumi's questions concerning Souvanna's intentions, Sullivan stressed the fact that the Prince, though he definitely was leaving for Paris, had no intention of surrendering his mandate to form a new government.

Following Sullivan's report, Phoumi, during a lengthy conversation which "became heated at points," charged that the US, for reasons he could not understand, was abandoning him and betraying itself by attempting to "impose Souvanna on the Lao people." Although he did not specifically reject the troika concept that had been discussed at Khang Khay, Phoumi spurned every suggestion that he adopt a more flexible negotiating position.

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In addition, Phoumi argued that Souvanna, by eight months of unsuccessful efforts, had proved himself incapable of forming a new government. The King might well ask Souvanna, when the two next met, to surrender his mandate. Phoumi then intimated that the RLG, using Souvanna's trip to Paris as justification, might take some public action to indicate that it no longer considered the Prince's mandate to be valid. Creel thereupon warned Phoumi that any such action at this time "would be considered most unwise by the US Government and would create 'a difficult situation.'" Phoumi replied that a "difficult situation already existed" but he indicated that the RLG had no immediate plans along this line (see item 11 April 1962).

Another complaint voiced by Phoumi was that, although there should be neither victor nor vanquished in a political settlement, the choice of Souvanna indicated that the Prince was, in fact, the victor. Sullivan, however, argued that Souvanna, an internationally accepted neutral, was the only possible symbol of a compromise in which there was neither victor nor vanquished.

Phoumi also said that the Agence France Presse would, on the following day, file a sensational story from Washington. The story would contain a US announcement regarding the Lao situation. Creel and Sullivan replied that "if Phoumi turned out to be right then his intelligence regarding the US Government's plans must be better than ours." The Americans surmised that either Phoumi had learned of the invitation to Souvanna but not of its rejection or he believed the US was about to announce "recognition" of Souvanna and corresponding "derecognition" of the RLG."

Finally, Phoumi indicated that the National Assembly was about to grant full powers to the King, who would then form a new government with himself as Prime Minister. Phoumi denied Sullivan's charge that such a maneuver would result in the partition of the kingdom. When Sullivan, recalling Savang's oft-expressed desire to avoid politics, challenged the claim that the King would serve as Prime Minister, Phoumi replied that Westerners did not understand the Royal mentality. Phoumi concluded by stating his intention to observe the military situation in the South. Boun Oum would remain in Vientiane during his absence.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1387, 3 Apr 62.

3 Apr 62

Prime Minister Sarit told the press that he was unable to force Phoumi to accept US policy since even the Lao King reportedly disagreed with it. Thailand did not want to interfere in Lao international affairs. Sarit further commented that suspension of US aid to Laos had some disadvantages since the Pathet Lao was still receiving Communist aid, "but it might be necessary to concede something now to gain more later." Ambassador Young interpreted Sarit's evasive comments as showing his concern for the impact of his actions on

influential sectors of Thai public opinion, which were strongly critical of US policy in Laos, and perhaps by a belief that avoidance of public acknowledgment of Thai efforts to change Phoumi's mind would make it easier for the Lao General to reverse himself.

(On 6 April, the State Department instructed Ambassador Young to raise the matter of the Sarit press conference at his next meeting with Thanat. Young should point out the ill effect Sarit's comments had had on Souvanna (see item 5 April 1962) and the fact that the comments contradicted Harriman's public statement that the present course of action in Laos was endorsed by practically all nations concerned, including Thailand. The Department sympathized with Sarit's problem of internal criticism but at the same time believed that he should take into consideration the larger question of public opinion outside Thailand.)

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1542, 4 Apr 62;
SecState to Bangkok, 1535, 6 Apr 62.

4 Apr 62

Stopping over at Rangoon on his way from Laos to France, Souvanna had a short discussion with US Ambassador Everton. He told the Ambassador, as he had told the press upon his arrival, that the US must withdraw all military aid from the RLG in order to persuade that faction to cooperate in forming a coalition government. He also confirmed earlier reports (see item 31 March 1962) that his and Pathet Lao forces had promised not to launch an offensive within the next three months. (This promise appeared, however, in the context of Souvanna's remarks, to depend upon suspension of US military aid to the RLG and the consequent weakening of the RLG.)

During his talk with Ambassador Everton, Souvanna also commented upon the situation in South Viet Nam. To Souvanna, the only reasonable solution would be to remove Diem and replace him with some person who had the popular approval of the South Vietnamese people. The Lao Prince said that he could not understand the US supporting such an unpopular oppressor of the people. (On 7 April, CINCPAC called to the attention of the JCS these remarks about South Viet Nam. To CINCPAC, these remarks were evidence that Souvanna, far from supporting US efforts to assist South Viet Nam against the Communists, would work to overthrow Diem and would probably have "little interest" in curtailing Viet Cong movements through Laos.)

(C) Msgs, Rangoon to SecState, 764, 5 Apr 62;
CINCPAC to JCS, 072035Z Apr 62.

4 Apr 62

Secretary of State Rusk informed US Embassies in seven Far Eastern capitals and in Bonn that a RLG diplomatic effort might be launched to seek assistance in meeting the increasing difficulties caused by the withholding of the US monthly cash grant to Laos. Visits to the addressee capitals by special delegations from Laos

might be expected in addition to efforts by the resident RLG Ambassadors.

Although it would be unlikely, Rusk pointed out, that any offer of "practical" assistance would be forthcoming from the countries approached, it was important that the RLG not receive any encouragement or moral support in its current opposition to a negotiated peaceful settlement.

Rusk instructed US Ambassadors not to make a special approach on this subject, but they should use any available opportunity to point out to their host governments that a coalition government under Souvanna was the only feasible means to a peaceful settlement in Laos and that a peaceful settlement was the desired goal of all concerned. It was hoped that the several governments would respond to the RLG initiatives in this vein.

(C) Msg, SecState CIRC 1688, 4 Apr 62.

4 Apr 62

Ambassadors Young and Brown advised the Secretary of State of their joint assessment of the status of Thai efforts to persuade Phoumi to negotiate seriously for a coalition government and recommended certain courses of action that would constitute a concerted US-Thai attempt to further that undertaking. Ambassador Young asked for authorization to seek Thai agreement to the following as the best solution possible in Laos: a government with Souvanna as Prime Minister, Phoumi and Souphanouvong as Deputy Prime Ministers, and a distribution of the other cabinet posts among the three factions in accordance with an equitable formula; the Defense and Interior Ministries would be "neutralized" by organizing them in troika form as "committees of Defense and Interior" consisting of Souvanna, Phoumi, and Souphanouvong. This arrangement would mean a formal preservation of the status quo in Defense and Interior matters during a fairly lengthy provisional period, the Ambassadors admitted, but that would merely be an "honest recognition" of the political facts of life in Laos.

If the Thai Government agreed to the above, Young wished to engage Thanat in direct discussions with Phoumi, both to persuade Phoumi to accept this solution as a basis for negotiation and to discover what reasonable assurances he would desire concerning the practical functioning of the troika. To speed the pace of these discussions Young intended to warn Thanat that time was running out and that if Phoumi did not soon show a cooperative spirit, the "US would have to take actions in its own right." Young sought authorization to tell Thanat that in addition to the importance of ending quickly the potentially explosive military confrontation in Laos and bringing the Geneva accords into effect, early results were required because

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Phoumi seemed set on taking irrevocable action about 11 May in the direction of assigning full powers to the King. If Phoumi thus abrogated Souvanna's mandate and ended any hope of the "Souvanna solution" that the US and its Allies had been working for, it would be considered as "a direct challenge to the President which he could not allow to go without counter action."

The Ambassadors observed that this plan might not be acceptable to the RLG or even to Thailand. It was very likely, therefore, that the US would have to apply further pressure, probably in the form of military sanctions, against the RLG.

In his reply the following day the Secretary of State did not approve the recommendations for a concerted effort. He believed that the Thai leaders should be allowed to retain the initiative for the present in relations with Phoumi. "We are willing to let them work in their own way without specified time limit," the Secretary wrote, and the US would "coordinate closely with them without, however, calling all shots." The Thai leaders could be "encouraged" to explore further with Phoumi the idea of a troika in Defense and Interior, if this appeared to present possibilities for a settlement that Phoumi could accept. Concerning assurances for Phoumi during the interim period before the integration of Lao forces, the Secretary said that the US could not make specific advance commitments since so much depended on Phoumi's continued good faith, but the US would expect to help him to "hold his own" against the Pathet Lao if he lived up to the integration agreement. The US would also support Phoumi in hard bargaining on the force integration agreement itself, so that the FAR would not be placed at a disadvantage during the process.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1543, 4 Apr 62;
SecState to Bangkok, 1527, 5 Apr 62.

5 Apr 62

In a policy directive regarding the future of SEATO (circulated to the JCS on 11 April) the State Department noted that the failure of the organization to bring military action to bear in the Lao situation had badly shaken the confidence of Asiatic members (particularly Thailand) in the protection afforded them by the alliance. Although the Rusk-Thanat communique of 6 March had reassured Thailand on this point (see item), the problem was a broader one, reflected in SEATO's lack of success as a political association.

The State Department proposed a number of measures designed to maintain the military alliance as a deterrent to overt Communist aggression, to de-emphasize the nonmilitary aspects, to support a SEATO counter-subversion effort, to expedite decision-making, and to minimize the impediment of SEATO membership to the development of closer relations among the nations of Southeast Asia.

(S) Policy Directive, PD/FE-1, "Future of SEATO," 5 Apr 62; (S) JCS 2339/65, 11 Apr 62; both in JMF 9060/9105 (5 Apr 62).

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5 Apr 62

Met during his layover at the London airport by officials of the Foreign Office and American Embassy, Souvanna appeared dejected and even disgusted over the lack of progress toward formation of a coalition government. He said he had no intention of returning to Laos until assured that Phoumi and Boun Oum were ready to negotiate seriously. Stating that the fate of Laos was now completely in the hands of the Americans, Souvanna said the "Lao people cannot understand" a US policy that on the one hand voiced support for a neutral government of national union and on the other continued to give military support to Phoumi. He spoke of a need for additional American economic and military pressures but avoided a direct answer when asked whether under current circumstances it would be desirable for US advisors to be withdrawn from FAR units. While admitting that zones of control in Laos were not well-defined, Souvanna asserted that Phoumi had moved troops into areas not held prior to the May cease-fire, greatly reinforcing some positions. Hence he saw some justification for Pathet Lao operations against these FAR concentrations. Souvanna declared, however, that his side had no intention of attacking Phoumi's forces in major towns or in areas under FAR control prior to the cease-fire, unless Phoumi attacked first.

Souvanna's remarks regarding Thailand's government leaders were scathing. He referred to Sarit's press statement of 3 April (see item) as a clear indication that the Thai were not to be trusted.

Souvanna made many of the same statements upon his arrival at Paris later in the day. When asked if he intended to visit the United States, he said he had been invited to Washington but would not go before completing the formation of a Lao government of national unity.

(C) Msg, London to SecState, 3674, 5 Apr 62; (U) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4711, 5 Apr 62.

5 Apr 62

In a memorandum to the JCS, the Chief of Staff, Air Force, expressed his grave concern over the "probability" of additional Communist military victories in Southeast Asia. The Communists were aggressively infiltrating all of Southeast Asia, CSAF said, and would, with further victories, establish the forward operating bases from which they could continue to attempt domination of the entire area. Echoing earlier JCS views (see item 13 January 1962), CSAF believed that if the Communists came to dominate Southeast Asia, pro-Western governments throughout the Far East would probably collapse. The US, in responding to the threat, was conceiving and executing programs on a country-by-country basis. When compared with one another these programs lacked "concentrated military interrelationship and direction." Elimination or denial of military footholds for the Communists would require quick, concerted action, not only locally, but throughout the Southeast Asia area. For this reason, CSAF considered it imperative that the JCS press for a clear US governmental statement of a

basic strategic objective for Southeast Asia, and an accompanying area-wide program for repulsing the Communists. He presented for JCS consideration a draft memorandum for the Secretary of Defense embodying the above beliefs. The memorandum also contained an assessment of Communist objectives in Southeast Asia, an analysis of the situation in each country in the area, and proposed strategic objectives and programs for the US and the Free World in Southeast Asia.

[Referred to J-5, this paper was still under study there on 15 August 1962, with a suspended deadline.]
(TS) JCS 2339/64, 10 Apr 62; JMF 9150/9105 (5 Apr 62).

5 Apr 62 CHJUSMAG Thailand reported that Sarit had agreed enthusiastically to a program of follow-on training for certain Thai and US units after the completion of SEATO Exercise AIR COBRA (see item 23-28 April 1962).

(Subsequently, US and Thai ground forces conducted two 5-day training exercises in Thailand in the period 30 April-9 May.)

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 218968, 6 Apr 62;
(U) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 738004, 5 May 62; (TS-NOFORN) J-3, Southeast Asia Sitrep 19062, 9 May 62.

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Ambassador Brown, who was in Bangkok, provided the Secretary of State with a preliminary assessment of the significance and implications of Phoumi's latest plan for a government headed by the King (see item 3 April 1962). The plan, according to Brown, called for the convening of a National Congress, composed of the National Assembly and King's Council, which would confer full powers on the King and also call upon him to head a new government. The King would then appoint himself Prime Minister of a cabinet in which Souvanna would be Minister of Defense, Boun Oum Minister of Interior, and Souphanouvong Minister of Economy and Planning. Also included in the King's government would be Phoui Sananikone as Foreign Minister, Nhouay Abhay as Minister of Education, and Outhong Souvannavong as Minister of Social Affairs. Phoumi, who would hold no portfolio, was to serve as commander-in-chief of the Lao armed forces. The plan was scheduled to be carried out soon after the opening of 11 May of the annual session of the National Assembly.

Brown considered this proposal a variation of the King-and-councils scheme (see item 9 February 1962), which had been rejected by both Souvanna and Souphanouvong, as well as by the King himself. Phoumi, the Ambassador charged, had offered this new proposal in a "transparent attempt to drive Souvanna out of the picture" by, in effect, invalidating the Prince's mandate to form a new government. Brown acknowledged, however, that the plan was supported by many Lao citizens as offering the best means of ending the political impasse while at the same time preventing the spread of Communism.

Turning to the possible reactions to Phoumi's proposal, the Ambassador expressed doubt that it would be any more acceptable to Souvanna and Souphanouvong than the earlier King-and-councils formula had been. If, however, the King actually did accept a grant of full powers, these two Princes might find it embarrassing to oppose the plan. Under such circumstances, it also was possible that Souvanna might abandon completely his efforts to form a government, while Souphanouvong renewed hostilities. Whatever the reaction of the Princes, Brown was convinced that Communist China, North Viet Nam, and even the USSR would refuse to accept the King's new government as a proper one to sign the Geneva Agreements on behalf of Laos.

In spite of Phoumi's apparent confidence, Brown doubted that the King actually would take an active political role. On the other hand, the possibility that Savang might abandon his "Olympian detachment" could not be dismissed. The recent developments in Laos, along with Harriman's vigorous warnings (see item 24 March 1962), might have convinced him that royal action was vital to the survival of the kingdom.

Should the plan be executed, the result, according to Brown, would be the elimination of Souvanna in defiance of the US and its Western Allies. This direct challenge "could not be allowed to pass without some firm action on our part."

In determining the exact course of action, Brown warned, the US should remember that Phoumi's proposal had several apparently sincere and seemingly worth-while aspects. The procedures, which were consistent with the Lao constitution would entrust power to the King, who would serve even more effectively than Souvanna as a symbol of unity, independence, and tradition. The plan, moreover, would provide representation to the three factions, to their respective leaders, and to the kingdom's leading families -- the Sananikones, Abhays, and Souvannavongs -- and would be balanced between North and South. Adoption of the proposal also would put an end to the much-criticized Boun Oum regime and, "at least ostensibly," reduce Phoumi to a purely military role. Friendly nations of Southeast Asia probably would endorse such a government. Since Souvanna and Souphanouvong had often proclaimed their loyalty to the throne, they might be reluctant to defy the wishes of the King. Finally, this was the type of proposal that, prior to the Geneva Conference, the "US would probably have been most happy to endorse."

It should be recognized, Brown warned, that, even though the US imposed military sanctions and joined in a Western approach to the King and Phoumi, the two men might resist these pressures and succeed in forming the kind of government outlined by Phoumi. Brown therefore recommended that, if it became clear that US pressures were unlikely to achieve the result of "killing this project in its entirety," the US should shift to a policy of trying to shape the scheme along more acceptable lines. If possible, the King's government must be generally regarded as "a way-station," an interim solution along the route to an ultimate coalition government of the type Souvanna had been trying to construct. One possible course

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suggested by Brown was that the King might be induced to give to Phoui Sananikone the mandate to form a government previously held by Souvanna, or perhaps to designate Phoui the Prime Minister of a "caretaker government." In either role, Phoui Sananikone could be charged with negotiating with Souvanna and Souphanouvong toward formation of a provisional government of national unity within the framework of the Zurich communique (see item 22 June 1961).

Replying the following day, Acting Secretary of State Ball thanked Brown for his recommendations and suggested that the US Ambassador explore with the Western Ambassadors at Vientiane and with such Lao leaders as feasible the possibility of shaping Phoumi's plan to conform to the objectives of US policy. The idea of having the King as Prime Minister with a troika of Deputies, Ball observed, might be "negotiable as a face-saver for Phoumi." Ball made no comment on the suggested use of Phoui Sananikone in a major role.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1548, 5 Apr 62; SecState to Vientiane, 875, 6 Apr 62.

6 Apr 62 Ambassador Brown, with the concurrence of CHMAAG Laos, analyzed for Assistant Secretary Harriman the various forms of military sanction against the RLG available to the US if the Thai efforts to change Phoumi's course of action failed. The Ambassador mentioned the following sanctions:

1. Suspension of all deliveries of military supplies from outside Laos. This would be a clear-cut major action in the military field which would be known in a few days to the entire FAR and have a major effect throughout the FAR and on Phoumi, the King, and Sarit. Moreover, it would have no adverse effect on the physical capability of the FAR to fight for about 30 days, giving Phoumi time to reverse his present course. After 30 days, however, this sanction would seriously impair the physical capability of the FAR to fight and would be impossible to reverse if Phoumi remained obdurate. Also, it would be difficult to justify this action in view of continued Soviet aid to the Pathet Lao.

2. Withdrawal of White Star teams from field units. This would be a sanction without widespread adverse military effects, since it would not deprive the FAR of the sinews of war. It was just what Souvanna had asked for and British Ambassador Addis had recommended. However, the withdrawal would have an adverse effect on the fighting capability of the individual FAR units thus deprived, and it would as a practical matter, be irreversible. Moreover, it would have the least impact of any sanction on Phoumi; it would introduce the subject of a general withdrawal of all military advisors; it would deprive the US of its only independent source of knowledge of conditions in certain regions and parts of the FAR.

3. Reduction of air support inside Laos. This would have an immediate impact and would be easily and quickly reversible. For units not fighting it would have no adverse effect on physical military capability, but since almost

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all FAR units were periodically involved some form of action that used up ammunition and hardware, the US would be forced to reach a final decision very quickly whether to reverse itself or let the FAR collapse. In any event, both CHMAAG and the Ambassador emphasized, this action could not be taken until after the withdrawal of White Star teams from the Lao field units because of risks to US personnel.

The Ambassador commented that the withdrawal of White Star teams was probably the most politically practical sanction: it could be described as merely withdrawing military advisors from a government that refused advice. Also it provided the longest period between the US action and the physical impairment of the FAR, and it was favored by Souvanna and some US Allies. However, although it would have some psychological effect as the first military sanction, it would produce the least pressure on Phoumi, who could more easily make good his boast to go it alone without US advice than without US supplies. The suspension of military imports, on the other hand, would exert the maximum immediate psychological pressure on Phoumi, the King, Sarit, and the entire FAR. Although it involved a greater risk, the Ambassador could see no sanction that did not involve some risk. Reduction of air support, however, was judged the most drastic and should be contemplated only as a final measure.

In a later message the same day, the Ambassador made several further comments: reduction of deliveries of military hardware would take time to become noticeable and would have little or no effect; reduction of POL would be noticed and have an effect dependent on the degree of reduction but would be hard to justify; and failure to replace departing MAAG officers would have no effect whatever on Phoumi's course of action.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1550, 1553, 6 Apr 62.

6 Apr 62 CHMAAG Laos told CINCPAC that the US Embassy in Vientiane had requested that AID Washington transfer the funds required for a civic action program in the Bolovens Plateau (see items 23 February and 22, 29 March 1962) to the Department of Defense for allotment to MAAG Laos. CHMAAG agreed with this request because: 1) MAAG already had complete operational responsibility for the program, inasmuch as AID Laos personnel could not operate in an insecure area such as the Bolovens Plateau; and therefore 2) allotment of the funds to MAAG would assure clear lines of fiscal accountability for funds expended in the program. (On the following day, CINCPAC informed the JCS that he concurred in the judgments of CHMAAG and the Embassy. (See item 4 May 1962.)

(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 219001, 6 Apr 62; CINCPAC to JCS, 070233Z Apr 62.

6 Apr 62 In a conversation with Souphanouvong at Khang Khay, British Ambassador Addis proposed that "second-level" contacts among the three Lao factions be renewed at Ban Namone or some similar location. Souphanouvong replied that such meetings would be useless since the political issues "were now so clearly drawn." He also thought that talks of this

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kind would not keep hostilities from flaring up since he expected both sides to keep on mopping up in their own zones. Addis concluded from this reaction that it was useless to press the matter for the present. He replied to Souphanouvong's remark about mopping up with a warning against allowing military action to upset the political situation.

When Addis raised the question of establishing regular visits to Khang Khay by members of the British Embassy staff, Souphanouvong went beyond this by suggesting that the UK set up permanent representation there, either by detaching an officer from the Vientiane Embassy or by establishing a Consulate. Addis made no commitment and later told his Western colleagues in Vientiane that he believed Phoumi would react strongly against any move to establish permanent British representation at Khang Khay, probably by banning all contact by Westerners with the rival "capital." Accordingly he was not disposed to recommend to his government anything beyond the present schedule of informal contacts.

(C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1401, 6 Apr 62; 1404, 7 Apr 62.

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Having previously occupied the high ground east of Nam Tha, the 55th Parachute Battalion advanced about 5 miles against light resistance to a hill approximately 12 miles east of the town by 10 April. A parallel attack launched two days earlier by the 28th and 30th Infantry Battalions had failed to make significant gains, but on 12 April, after the Parachute Battalion had moved forward, the two infantry battalions advanced slightly.

In southern Laos, a probing attack by the enemy on 8 April forced elements of the 43d Volunteer Battalion and 4301st ADC to withdraw from their position, near the Cambodian border, but the position was retaken by counterattack the next day. On the northwestern fringe of the Bolovens Plateau a company-size enemy force attacked FAR positions.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 219488, 9 Apr 62; 100915Z Apr 62; 120945Z Apr 62.

9 Apr 62

In a letter handed to President Kennedy by the Lao Ambassador in Washington, King Savang, after reviewing the history of close cooperation between the US and Laos, observed that this "same understanding, same closeness, and same line of action on the part of the American and Lao Governments" no longer existed. The King then listed several examples of the deteriorating relations between the two nations.

The Lao people, according to King Savang, had come to wonder whether the US did not actually intend to disengage itself from the fight against Communism in Southeast Asia. This suspicion regarding US intentions had been occasioned by American insistence on the formation of a Lao coalition in which the Pathet Lao was represented. To form such a government, the King continued, would involve an alliance with Communism, for the Pathet Lao was a "politico-military creation of the Viet Minh." No alliance between anti-Communists and Communists could possibly work, and nowhere

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else had anti-Communists been asked to collaborate with their enemies. Entry into such an arrangement, the King predicted, would lead to the eventual destruction of Laos.

Another point "confusing to the Lao people and Government" was the insistence that the 14-nation agreement worked out at Geneva could effectively protect the future independence and sovereignty of the kingdom. The Lao people, in assessing the value of such an agreement, could not help but recall that the US had at first advised against participating in an international conference. (Initially, the US had opposed a Soviet proposal for an international conference because of the propaganda debate that would occur in any such forum; see item 20 February 1961. The US, however, soon came to favor a conference; see item 22 March 1961.)

Finally, the King noted that the US, in spite of its avowed desire to protect Lao sovereignty, had suspended aid, thus weakening the RLG in its struggle to preserve the kingdom from Communist domination. Even more damaging to the Lao cause was the cessation of moral support implied by the suspension of cash grants. "Without that support," the King maintained, "the aid would represent mere dollar policy, a policy for profit and the benefit of private interests in no way tied to the high ideal from which it supposedly stems." (For the President's reply, see item 19 April 1962.)

(C) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 879, 11 Apr 62; 905, 19 Apr 62.

- 9 Apr 62 Air photo and visual reconnaissance, reported by USARMA Vientiane, provided evidence of extensive road construction in progress from the Yunnan border toward Phong Saly, with "workers swarming like ants." (For announcement of the Chinese Communist agreement to build such a road, see item 15 January 1962.)

(S) Msg, USARMA Vientiane to DA, DA IN 221683, 16 Apr 62.

- 11 Apr 62 Sisouk, the RLG's Acting Foreign Minister, made in a published interview what Ambassador Brown termed "probably the most bitter reproach of US policy made to date by a high-ranking Lao official."

According to Sisouk, Souvanna's departure had little effect on the Lao political situation, although a prolonged absence would "reduce to nil his chances of forming a national union government." Sisouk then charged that Souvanna not only was incapable of forming a coalition but also was no longer able to restrain the Pathet Lao, which was now attacking on all fronts. Thus, the RLG was tempted to interpret Souvanna's departure as a "false excuse for inaction, not to say an implicit renunciation of his mission. Souvanna, moreover, was believed waiting for the Americans, "once his enemies and now his allies and accomplices," to prove their sincerity by exerting extreme pressure on the RLG.

Turning to relations between the RLG and the US Government, Sisouk maintained that the US had suspended its aid in order to force the Lao Government to "accept Washington's political views and, as Harriman declared,

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to show America's sincerity toward Russia and its respect for its international obligations." In short, the RLG was not only being humiliated, it was also being pressed to capitulate without receiving any guarantees in return. The US, Sisouk proclaimed, was placing greater confidence in the trustworthiness of the Communists than in the determination of the RLG to defend Lao independence. If the US, as Souvanna advocated, should withdraw its military support, it would fulfill the wishes of the Chinese and Viet Minh by giving the enemy through diplomacy what Communist military efforts had failed to win. Instead of trying to take advantage of Sino-Soviet differences, the US, so the RLG believed, was sacrificing Laos for a worthless understanding with the Communists.

Sisouk also claimed that Viet Minh troops, in excess of the 10,000-man estimate credited to US observers, were aiding the Pathet Lao in a determined effort to seize the Tchepone-Saravane-Attapeu corridor before the coming of the rainy season. Western and neutral Governments, Sisouk charged, were deliberately minimizing the role of the Viet Minh "in order not to intervene."

(OUO) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1417, 11 Apr 62.

11 Apr 62 Ambassador Young reported to the Secretary of State that Foreign Minister Thanat had reached an understanding with the Malayan Prime Minister for the latter to use his good offices to influence Phoumi to accept the neutralist coalition for Laos when the RLG goodwill mission visited Kuala Lumpur. Thailand had decided to receive the Lao mission and planned to use the occasion to stress to Phoumi the need for flexibility and team work in negotiations for a neutral Laos under a coalition. Answering the Malayan Prime Minister's request for advice, Thanat urged that he too receive the Lao Mission and stress these same ideas. Thanat believed that the RLG would accept the US plan if several other Asian governments all took the same position. He also cautioned the US against taking hasty action or imposing sanctions before diplomatic persuasion could be tried. This could produce "very bad consequences for all concerned."

(On 13 April the Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Young to brief the Malayan Prime Minister on the US position, if possible, when the latter visited Bangkok.)

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1583, 11 Apr 62; SecState to Bangkok, 1575, 13 Apr 62.

12 Apr 62 Ambassador Gavin in Paris informed Souvanna of a message of 11 April in which Harriman first reasserted US support for the formation of a coalition government under Souvanna and then stated the US position regarding its military support of Phoumi. Gavin pointed out that while US financial aid to the RLG had been suspended, the question of withdrawing military assistance to the FAR was complicated by Souphanouvong's aggressive talk about line-straightening operations by the Pathet Lao (see item 31 March 1962) and by the continued presence of significant Viet Minh forces in Laos. Moreover, military sanctions would weaken the "Vientiane non-Communists" on whose strength Souvanna would have to rely when he became Prime Minister.

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Souvanna then made certain remarks. He was content to postpone returning to Laos until US pressure had brought Phoumi to terms. He felt that major difficulties might arise after a coalition government was formed, since Phoumi would be unlikely to accept the loss of power this entailed and might "ferment dissidence even possibly to the point of a coup d'etat." Regarding Thailand, Souvanna was bitterly suspicious, stating that the Thai would never overcome the fear that a prosperous and unified Laos would attract the population of northern Thailand. In regard to King Savang's message to the President (see item 9 April 1962), Souvanna deplored the fact that Phoumi had involved the King. He was aware of the RLG plan to dispatch goodwill missions abroad in search of aid (see item 2 April 1962), but, according to Ambassador Gavin, "did not appear to take the matter seriously."

(S) Msgs, SecState to Paris, 5456, 11 Apr 62; Paris to SecState, 4841, 12 Apr 62.

13 Apr 62 Acting Foreign Minister Sisouk informed Ambassador Brown of Phoumi's theories regarding the formation of a coalition government. Phoumi, determined not to accept Souvanna as Prime Minister, intended to have the King serve in that office (see items 3 and 5, 6 April 1962). Sisouk, however, had recommended that Phoumi suggest that the King preside over a cabinet based on the Geneva formula of eight neutrals, four rightists, and four leftists (see item 19 January 1962). According to Sisouk's proposal, the three Princes would serve as Vice Prime Ministers under the King. The Foreign Minister told the Ambassador that the matter would be discussed with the King on 15 and 16 April (see item 17 April 1962) and that Phoumi would be willing to allow Souvanna to be Minister of Defense and of Interior in such a government.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1422, 13 Apr 62.

13 Apr 62 Phoumi told Hasey that he would meet the King on 15 April and arrange the details for the King's acceptance of the office of Prime Minister in a new government (see item 17 April 1962). There would be no immediate announcement, but, after the National Assembly had convened on 11 May, the Congress would vote full powers to the King. As soon as he had accepted this grant of power, the King would summon the three Princes to confer with him on the composition of the new government. According to Phoumi, Savang had indicated agreement with this course, after Phoumi had advised him that the US was unlikely to change its policy and therefore the King must act.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1425, 17 Apr 62.

13 Apr 62 Phoui Sananikone expressed to Ambassador Brown his doubts that the King would agree to become Prime Minister, unless both Souvanna and Souphanouvong agreed to his assuming office. Ambassador Brown then mentioned Phoumi's earlier statement (see item 3 April 1962) that the King would head a new government. Phoui replied that, though the King had at one time been willing to hold office, the firmness shown by Harriman and Sullivan (see items 24 March, 25 March, and 3 April 1962) had "shaken both the King and Phoumi."

Turning to other subjects, Phoui said that he saw no immediate solution to the current impasse. He believed that the RLG's attempt to muster aid from the various Asian

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nations would serve a useful purpose in that it would indicate just how little aid was available. In addition, Phoui considered it possible that the Thai Government, which he believed could be of scant help in bringing about negotiations, might be telling the US one thing and Phoumi another. Finally, Phoui stated that Phoumi was confident that the US would resume its program of aid to the RLG.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1425, 17 Apr 62.

13 Apr 62 Ambassador Gavin reported on a conversation between Souvanna's representative in Paris, La Norindr, and US officials. La offered as his personal opinion the idea that the sole means of stabilizing the "delicate" situation in Laos was by persuading Souvanna to return there. This could best be done, he continued, by the withdrawal of US military aid from the RLG, plus a concerted Western appeal for Souvanna to return to Laos. While La admitted that his recommendation was not easy to reconcile with Souvanna's desire to remain in Paris, US officials felt that La was "in a good position to make judgments on the possible reactions of his boss."

La also stated that Souvanna had instructed Quinim to make every effort to achieve a "more neutral output in the information field." As a related matter, La mentioned that he had been attempting to interest both Reuters and the French Press Agency in establishing news service facilities in Khang Khay, and he hoped for success with the latter. The Embassy officials took this opportunity to do some "missionary work" regarding US press representation in Laos, but La expressed his regrets that he could do nothing on this score.

La concluded with the suggestion that "in view of Souvanna's respect for Harriman," any important news for the Prince be transmitted as a message from Harriman.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4861, 13 Apr 62.

16 Apr 62 During a royal reception at Luang Prabang, Ambassador Brown talked briefly with King Savang. The King declared that the Lao problem arose from a clash between races, a conflict that could not be resolved by the mere establishment of a coalition government. Brown thereupon asked if this was, in effect, a suggestion that Laos be divided along racial lines, with one part of the kingdom going to North Viet Nam and the other part to Thailand. The King, however, "did not seem disposed to pursue the subject further."

Among other things, the King expressed a lack of confidence in both the Geneva Agreements and the alleged Soviet desire for a neutral Laos. He agreed that the three Princes had never engaged in sincere negotiations. Although admittedly aware of his nation's weaknesses, the King declared that the Lao people would never submit to domination by the Annamites or the Communists. He remained unconvinced by Brown's arguments in favor of a Souvanna government. Finally, the King spoke of his past visits to the US and his friendship for the nation that had saved Laos during the 1954 crisis. "After I have lost my throne," he added, "I will come again to Washington."

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1425, 17 Apr 62.

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17 Apr 62 At a White House meeting, the President asked the opinion of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, regarding the feasibility of withholding or even terminating military aid to Phoumi. The Chairman replied that such action would be a backward step, and the President seemed inclined to agree. The Chairman also told the President that withdrawal of US advisors, even if only from forward areas, was not a good idea. The President replied that he could see no useful purpose in withdrawing military assistance at present.

(TS) JCS Secy Files, 18 Apr 62.

17 Apr 62 Phoumi told Hasey that the King had definitely agreed to head a coalition government of the type suggested by Sisouk (see item 13 April 1962). This royal decision, however, had not been discussed by the cabinet. The three Princes would serve as Deputy Prime Ministers, and the cabinet would be apportioned according to the Geneva formula of 8-4-4. Phoumi himself might be named Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, although the King seemed to favor his serving as a special adviser with status as Minister without portfolio. Further discussion of this matter with the King was scheduled.

Phoumi also reported that the cabinet had approved goodwill missions (see item 18 March 1962) to Bangkok on 24 April and to Saigon on 4 May. The Chinese Nationalist Government had agreed to receive a mission on a date yet to be arranged, while Korea and Burma had given their tentative approval. Malaya (and possibly the Philippine Commonwealth) had not yet reacted to the Lao diplomatic overtures.

Ambassador Brown commented that the real attitude and intentions of King Savang were still as much a mystery as ever, but the possibility of his taking an active role appeared to be increasing. The Sisouk formula for a King's government, now apparently advocated by Phoumi, was "much more balanced and constructive" than any previous version "and consequently more difficult to oppose."

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1425, 17 Apr 62.

17 Apr 62 CHMAAG Laos reported the results of the first tests in Laos of the CARIBOU aircraft (see item 19 March 1962). Operating into and out of unimproved airfields with as little as 1,000 feet of runway and as high as 5,000 feet elevation, the CARIBOU had proved to be far superior, at least in dry weather, to any other plane yet flown in Laos. CHMAAG recommended two modifications to the aircraft and he requested that it be retained for tests in Laos during the rainy season, until November 1962. (On 27 April, however, the Advanced Research Project Agency (ARPA) detachment in Saigon informed the Department of Defense that the CARIBOU was urgently needed in Saigon for a research and development project. The ARPA unit recommended that, after the completion of this project, the CARIBOU remain in Saigon under ARPA control for use in South Viet Nam, Laos, and Thailand.)

(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC et al., DA IN 223009, 17 Apr 62; COMUSMACV to OSD, DA IN 225115, 27 Apr 62.

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18 Apr 62 The Civil Affairs Mobile Training Team (CAMTT) requested by CHMAAG Laos on 8 March (see item) arrived in Laos.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, OSD (ISA), et al., DA IN 228391, 10 May 62.

19 Apr 62 The Secretary of State forwarded to Ambassador Brown the text of President Kennedy's reply to King Savang's letter of 9 April (see item). The President expressed his deep regret at the Lao Government's "fundamental misunderstanding" of US policy, reiterated the unchanging friendship of the US for the Lao nation and people, and sought to explain the reasoning behind the current American position.

Because Pathet Lao forces by 1 April 1961 had been gaining the upper hand in their fight against the FAR, the United States, out of friendship for the Lao people, had joined in obtaining a cease-fire designed to preserve the existence of the kingdom and to pave the way for a negotiated settlement which, in turn, would insure the future independence of Laos. Toward this ultimate goal, the US and other friends of Laos had urged both the creation of a neutral coalition led by Prince Souvanna and the implementation of the understandings reached at Geneva, especially of the agreement to withdraw foreign troops from Laos.

Unfortunately, leaders of the RLG had violated the spirit of the various communiques issued by the three Princes (see items 22 June 1961, 6-8 October 1961, and 19 January 1962) and refused to negotiate in good faith toward the establishment of a coalition government. Because of this display of stubbornness, the US Government had lost confidence in the willingness of the RLG to negotiate in good faith and had therefore decided to suspend aid. The US could not provide financial or military support for courses of action contrary to commitments to which the RLG had openly agreed, such as those contained in the various communiques of the Princes. If Phoumi's refusal to negotiate should cause the resumption of hostilities, the President "could hardly justify American military intervention to Congress in the full knowledge that the possibility of a reasonable peaceful settlement had deliberately been forfeited."

President Kennedy then repeated the conviction that a negotiated settlement offered the only possible hope for Laos. A coalition government assisted by the nations of the Free World, protected by the Geneva accords, and supported by all moderate elements within the kingdom could survive the perils of Communism.

American military opinion, the President continued, indicated that the resumption of hostilities would result in the conquest by the Pathet Lao of the entire country. Since the policy of the RLG would, if uncorrected, undoubtedly result in renewed warfare, the interests of the Lao people could best be served by the RLG's abandoning its inflexible position and, while there was still time, entering into sincere negotiations.

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In a separate message, the Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Brown, when presenting the President's letter, to "make orally the following points to the King in the language you consider most effective."

Neither the President nor Congressional leaders, the King was to be told, were "prepared to contemplate" the commitment of US troops in Laos. Although the President did not intend at the present time to make a public statement to this effect, he wanted the King to realize that, in spite of any efforts the RLG might make to alter this policy, a military intervention by US forces was out of the question. If he considered it necessary, the President would publicly announce this decision in order to prevent any misunderstanding of US policy.

Ambassador Brown also was to inform the King that the US intended to make every effort within its power to assure a just and equitable implementation of those measures designed to protect the independence and neutrality of Laos. Among these measures were the withdrawal of foreign troops and the proportional integration of the existing armed forces into a national army. The US, moreover, was prepared to support the FAR until integration had been achieved.

The US, the Secretary of State continued, was willing to assist the coalition government, insofar as possible, to conduct free elections. The US also would provide the new government with economic, military, and social assistance in a manner and amount consistent with the Geneva Agreement and agreeable to the US and Lao Governments.

Finally, the King was to be told that President Kennedy and the US Government considered it important that Phoumi take an active and prominent part in the coalition government. Phoumi's forceful leadership and the anti-Communist ideals he represented would be necessary for the success of the new regime. (For the Ambassador's presentation of the above, see item 23 April 1962.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 904, 19 Apr 62; (C) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 905, 19 Apr 62.

19 Apr 62 The State Department issued a decision made at the highest US Government level including instructions for dealing with the current Lao situation. US policy, the decision made clear, continued to be directed toward achieving a "Souvanna solution" and a Geneva settlement for Laos. So far, US efforts had met with some success: the British and French had been reassured and the Communists had refrained from rash military action. The US, therefore, was prepared to mount further prudent pressures on Phoumi. Thai efforts had not worked so far, and Phoumi continued to press for his "King's government" scheme (see items 13 and 17 April 1962) which, if initiated on 11 May, could have the effect of revoking Souvanna's mandate or otherwise driving him from the scene. Therefore, Ambassador Young was instructed to urge the Thai Government to :

1. Persuade the RLG to resume negotiations, renouncing claims to the Defense and Interior posts provided that some acceptable arrangement could be made for troika committees

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in the Souvanna cabinet to regulate these departments and Souphanouvong would give assurances that no military attempts to improve his position would be undertaken during the interim period.

2. Persuade Phoumi not to pursue the "King's government" scheme in any way that would revoke Souvanna's mandate or drive him from Laos. Moreover, the Thai should be informed that the US was prepared to impose unspecified military sanctions on Phoumi by 7 May if Thailand had not succeeded in persuading him by that time to drop his new government scheme planned for implementation on 11 May.

The Department of State would inform the British and French of these highest level decisions, stressing Souphanouvong's refusal to give satisfactory military assurances. The US was also considering the possibility of seeking agreement with the USSR on the levels of military equipment for the respective Lao forces in order to test Soviet intentions and to avoid escalation.

On the same day, Ambassador Young was also instructed to reveal to Sarit the contents of President Kennedy's letter and oral comments to the Lao King (see item 19 April 1962).

(S) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, 1601, 19 Apr 62; SecState to Vientiane, 904, 19 Apr 62; (C) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 905, 19 Apr 62.

19 Apr 62 In a meeting with Ambassador Young, Prime Minister Sarit admitted that he was having much trouble with Phoumi who was attacking him for his lack of support. Sarit did not look forward to the Lao goodwill mission, and although he would have to receive Boun Oum, he did not know what to say. Ambassador Young urged Sarit to repeat to Boun Oum his "Nong Khai advice" (see item 24 March 1962). Sarit expressed "nebulous negativism" over Phoumi's idea of a King's government for Laos, observing that the King could not make the plan work. Nonetheless, in Young's opinion, Phoumi was coming to Bangkok to sell his plan to the Thai Government. In an attempt to strengthen Sarit's opposition to the scheme, Young pointed out to him that Phoumi's plan would be rejected by Souvanna, who would probably remain in Europe, thus increasing the chances of a military crisis in Laos that would be dangerous to Thailand.

Ambassador Young also reported a conversation he later overheard between Thanat and the Lao Ambassador to Thailand in which Thanat pressed the Lao to advise his government to be realistic and flexible in undertaking real negotiations immediately.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1633, 20 Apr 62.

19 Apr 62 Ambassador Gavin informed the Secretary of State that, according to the Laos Desk Officer in the French Foreign Office, the current difficulty over the delivery of supplies for French activities at Xieng Khouang would have no immediate effect on the formal aspects of relations between the French and Lao Governments. The conflict had arisen when the RLG interfered with flights that delivered supplies to the six-man French Military Mission at Xieng Khouang, the French school, and the Catholic mission there. When

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questioned by Ambassador Falaize about the RLG's action, Phoumi denied any knowledge of previous flights, even though the RLG had received cargo manifests and had used the flights to transmit messages to Souvanna.

The desk officer declared that France had no intention of withdrawing the Military Mission, which had been authorized by the Geneva Accords and would continue to forward supplies via Phnom Penh. He then emphasized the importance of the French activities at Xieng Khouang, especially of the Catholic mission and the school which together had charge of 120 Lao children who otherwise would be trained in North Viet Nam.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, A-1973, 19 Apr 62.

19-26
Apr 62

On 19 April, the White House promulgated National Security Action Memorandum No. 149, authorizing the Secretary of Defense to plan for the withdrawal to the rear echelon in Laos of 7 or 8 White Star Mobile Training Teams (WSMTTs) currently located in forward field positions, but reserving to the Secretary of State the authority to order the actual withdrawal, when he deemed it appropriate but probably not before 7 May. The State Department immediately informed the Vientiane Embassy, and on the following day the JCS informed CINCPAC, CHMAAG Laos, and others of this approved action. The JCS also provided the additional guidance from the State Department that the teams to be withdrawn should be those most exposed and therefore most likely to be overrun or captured by the enemy.

On 23 April, CHMAAG Laos informed CINCPAC, and Ambassador Brown informed the Department of State, that the teams to be withdrawn would be those at Nam Tha and those stationed with forward units north of Paksane and in the Nhommarath-Mahaxay area. Both men noted that withdrawal of these teams would reduce US capabilities in certain respects. In addition, Ambassador Brown told the State Department that the teams chosen were those located where contact with the enemy was currently most active, and those that were currently most in the public eye. Phoumi would be informed of the withdrawal, the Ambassador reported, only when it was actually in progress.

Finally, on 26 April, in response to concern expressed on the previous day by CINCPAC, CHMAAG reported to his commander that the withdrawal as planned would not "denude" any area of US advisory support. All WSMTTs in the Nam Tha area would be withdrawn, but two MAAG senior advisors and supporting personnel would remain there; the teams near Paksane and Mahaxay-Nhommarath would be withdrawn from forward battalions but would be retained at the respective GM headquarters.

(S) NSAM No. 149, 19 Apr 62, att to JCS 2344/40, 24 Apr 62; JMF 9155.2/5191 (17 Aug 61). (S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 903, 19 Apr 62; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4160, 20 Apr 62; CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 223817, 23 Apr 62; CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 251844Z Apr 62; CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC DA IN 224675, 26 Apr 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1142, 23 Apr 62.

21-22
Apr 62

After having launched two attacks against the enemy from the position east of Nam Tha reached on 10 April (see item 8-12 April 1962) and having been repulsed each time, the 55th Parachute Battalion was overrun, along with the supporting 1st Parachute Battalion, by an enemy attack of 3 to 5 battalion strength. Pursued by the enemy, the 55th battalion withdrew to Ban Nam Pick, about 10 miles southeast of Nam Tha, where it joined elements of the 13th Volunteer Battalion. The next day, 22 April, the FAR forces, harassed by enemy small arms and mortar fire, withdrew to Nam Tha. FAR casualties were estimated at 40 to 50 men killed; FAR sources estimated those of the enemy at 400.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, 140800Z Apr 62; 150930Z Apr 62; 171000Z Apr 62; 231025Z Apr 62; (S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, JCS, OSD, DA IN 225856, 1 May 62.

22 Apr 62 During an informal chat with an officer of the US Embassy in Vientiane, Acting Foreign Minister Sisouk declared that, as far as the RLG was concerned, Souvanna was definitely "out of the question" as Prime Minister. The Prince, however, would be accepted as one of three Vice Prime Ministers in a government headed by the King (see item 17 April 1962). Sisouk believed that the King, before accepting a grant of full powers from the National Assembly, should summon the Princes to Luang Prabang and announce his intentions, so that the Princes would not be presented with a fait accompli. The voting of full powers to the King, Sisouk maintained, would not necessarily mean that Souvanna's mandate had been revoked.

In commenting upon this conversation, Ambassador Brown called attention to an interview, printed on the previous day, in which Sisouk had told the press that the RLG, aware that the US would not change its mind regarding Souvanna, would look to other Asian nations for technical and economic assistance. Sisouk, the Ambassador concluded, shared with many Lao leaders an attitude of "resignation before the inevitable on the one hand and polite defiance of the US on the other."

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1443, 23 Apr 62.

22 Apr 62 At a farewell dinner held in his honor in Vientiane, Soviet Ambassador Abramov told the French and British Ambassadors that Laos was "no longer a problem of first importance internationally but had dropped to third or fourth place." Abramov believed that Laos would remain quiet until Souvanna had returned from France. An early settlement, moreover, depended entirely upon the US; there was nothing that the Soviets or British could do.

If an early settlement was reached, Abramov continued, the Soviet Union would be pleased. If, however, the situation "dragged on for two, three, or even seven years without a solution," the Soviet Union was prepared to wait, even though the delay was accompanied by a steady deterioration in Laos. Even in the case of a long delay, Abramov remarked, the Lao problem was not likely to be solved until the Viet Nam crisis, which he ranked in first place internationally, had been resolved. Both Falaize and Addis

gained the impression that Abramov believed a delay might be of greater advantage to the USSR than would an immediate settlement.

Abramov also gave his opinion that Souvanna and Souphanouvong would reject Phoumi's proposal for a new government headed by the King (see item 17 April 1962). The Soviet Ambassador expressed regret that Brown had been unable to attend the dinner and made only friendly references to the US.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1446, 24 Apr 62.

22 Apr 62 CHMAAG Laos informed CHJUSMAG Thailand that Phoumi had "agreed in principle" on 3 April to the extension into Fiscal Year 1963 of the EKARAD program for training FAR units in Thailand. US MAP funds had already been programmed for the training under EKARAD during FY 63 of 2200 troops (the equivalent of three infantry battalions and four artillery batteries), and CHMAAG now intended to urge the FAR to designate specific units for training at specific times. There were currently two artillery batteries and one NCO class in EKARAD training, and CHMAAG had asked the FAR for 200 more NCO's for a May training class. In March, moreover, he had nominated to the FAR four infantry battalions, any one of which could be spared from the front without serious effect upon the combat posture of the FAR. Phoumi replied, however, that none of them could presently be spared, but that he would release one battalion for EKARAD "as soon as the tactical situation permits." CHMAAG felt that, under these circumstances, the training facilities at Lopburi, Thailand, should be retained for the EKARAD program.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CHJUSMAG Thailand, DA IN 224014, 22 Apr 62.

23 Apr 62 Ambassador Young passed on to Sarit and Thanat the US Government's high-level decision concerning Laos and the President's letter and Ambassador Brown's oral comments to the Lao King (see items 19 April 1962). At first Thanat complained that the President's letter and oral statement to the King were vague concerning arrangements for a political settlement of the Lao problem and safeguards against a Communist take-over if the Souvanna government proved ineffective. But Sarit asked that a text or summary of all these documents be given him to use during the anticipated Lao goodwill mission; with these documents, he remarked, he would have more to say to the Laotians than they would to him. He also stated officially for the the US Government that Thailand planned to make no commitments for assistance to the mission. He warned that persuading the RLG to accept the US policy would be a long-term effort and might never succeed. The Lao Government, he commented, seemed to have gone "wild." Moreover, the personal relations between Souvanna and the King formed another formidable obstacle to a solution. He vigorously subscribed to the objective of clearing Laos of all foreign military forces but doubted that the Chinese could be put out, particularly in view of their road and installation building in northeastern Laos (see item 9 April 1962).

The next day, Ambassador Young held a further conversation with the Thai Foreign Minister on the same subject. Thanat promised that he and Sarit would do everything they

could to push the US views during the visit of the Lao goodwill mission. He cautioned, however, against expecting immediate results; of all SEA peoples, the Lao took the longest time to change their minds and understood much less the broader implications and consequences of their problems. Persuading the RLG would be simpler, Thanat believed, if its goodwill mission heard the same arguments from Diem and the South Vietnamese Government as from Thailand and Malaya. He asked if the US had made its position fully known to Diem (see item 28 April 1962). He was somewhat concerned that Diem might take a contradictory line with the RLG.

Thanat also discussed the RLG's attempts to introduce the "King's gambit" as a formula for peaceful settlement. He believed the proposal, while not wholly feasible, at least showed that the RLG was moving out of the corner towards a face-saving compromise. He also felt that neutrals in the Defense and Interior posts would be better than a troika arrangement, but saw either plan a proper subject for discussion and negotiation.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1649, 24 Apr 62;
1642, 23 Apr 62.

23 Apr 62 Ambassador Brown delivered to King Savang the letter in which President Kennedy explained the reasoning behind US policy toward Laos (see item 19 April 1962). After commenting upon the letter, as instructed by the Secretary of State, Brown also expressed the hope that Souvanna's mandate to form a new government would not be revoked.

After listening to the US Ambassador's remarks, the King expressed appreciation for the President's message and stated that he would study the letter carefully. He also promised to inform the Government of President Kennedy's letter and urge that it be carefully considered, so that the RLG might act wisely and in a manner that would lead to the restoration of US aid.

Ambassador Brown believed that the King, who had seemed more than usually concerned about the loss of US aid and the possible failure of the Princes to reach agreement, would bring the President's letter to the attention of the RLG later in the day. Because of the King's sympathy for Phoumi's position, the Ambassador could not predict how earnestly Savang would urge acceptance of the President's advice. Brown feared, however, that "Phoumi and his colleagues have dug themselves so far into their position that the chances of their modifying it substantially remain slight."

During the audience the King reiterated his desire to rule as a constitutional monarch. Since leaders on both sides were tainted with dishonesty, the King could not avoid contact with corruption if he entered politics. Brown mentioned that "a considerable body of opinion" believed that a government under the King was the only possible solution and indicated that the National Assembly might appeal to the monarch to form a government (see item 17 April 1962). The King merely replied "We will

see." He later added, however, that for the members of the National Assembly to bestow full powers upon him would be an act of "great cowardice" on their part. Although the Ambassador interpreted these remarks to indicate that the King did not desire to become Prime Minister, Brown nevertheless believed that Savang, if called upon by the National Assembly, might possibly agree to head a new government.

The King also expressed concern lest the rivalry of the Princes result in the partition of the kingdom. The antidote, the King continued, would be a government of national union, probably led by Souvanna. Such a coalition would have to be composed of the nation's elite, but thus far both Boun Oum and Souvanna had simply presented lists of nonentities culled from among their followers. Not even the King himself could make a cabinet composed of "hacks" work successfully. The tragedy of Laos, the King complained, was that it had so few competent men and that these few would not cooperate.

Another point mentioned by the King was his belief that Communist China would never abandon its imperialistic designs and would continue to support wars of "liberation." Hence Laos would always be under attack.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1444, 23 Apr 62.

23-28
Apr 62

SEATO Exercise AIR COBRA, sponsored by Thailand and the United States with participation of Australia, France, and the United Kingdom, was conducted in Thailand. On 28 April CINCPAC reported the "simulated enemy in full retreat" as the result of successful tactical air operations. The approved publicity guidance for the exercise had stated that its objectives were to develop coordination in the use of SEATO air power through an air operations center, demonstrate the feasibility of rapid aerial resupply of ground forces, exercise SEATO capability to conduct behind-the-lines guerrilla warfare, and standardize operational procedures between participating SEATO forces.

(C) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1513, 30 Mar 62; CINCPAC to JCS, 250415Z and 282155Z Apr 62; (U) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 738004, 051955Z May 62.

25 Apr 62 An RLG goodwill mission, intended to gain support for the Boun Oum government from certain Asian nations, left Vientiane for Bangkok. Included in the party were Boun Oum, Phoumi, Acting Foreign Minister Sisouk, and officials of the Ministries of National Economy, Public Works, and Finance. Sisouk, in an informal conversation with reporters, said that Boun Oum and the majority of the group would return to Vientiane after visiting Bangkok. Phoumi and Sisouk, however, were to proceed to Seoul, Saigon, and Kuala Lumpur. The visit to Seoul was tentatively scheduled for 2-4 May and the mission to Malaya for 8-9 May. An exact date for the Saigon visit had not yet been fixed. Sisouk did not indicate whether he and Phoumi would return to Vientiane before journeying to South Korea.

(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1448, 25 Apr 62.

27 Apr 62 Ambassador Young reported to the Secretary of State that by public statements and long private talks during the Lao goodwill mission's visit to Thailand, Sarit and Thanat apparently had influenced Phoumi and others "to change in a satisfactory direction." Thanat had informed Young that the matter now looked very hopeful, and although the May deadline set by the US (see item 19 April 1962) had an impact on the Lao officials, the problem of face, both in Vientiane and Bangkok, was real, and ways must be found to adjust "public opinion." Therefore, he hoped the US would not undertake military sanctions on the 7 May date. He understood the US desire for valid and adequate assurances of the Lao change of opinion and was confident that these would be given in early May.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1666, 27 Apr 62.

27 Apr 62 As reinforcement for the defenses at Nam Tha, now pushed back to the immediate vicinity of the town and airfield, the first elements of the 11th Parachute Battalion were brought in from southern Laos. [During the next several days, the FAR continued to parachute elements of the 11th Battalion into the area, raising the total strength to eight battalions with approximately 4,500 men. Enemy forces, estimated at five to six battalions, were believed to number 2,500 infantry and support troops. Sporadic artillery and mortar fire was exchanged almost daily. On 27 April and again on 30 April the FAR garrison repulsed enemy attacks by forces ranging up to company size. Then on 5-6 May the enemy launched a full-scale assault by at least four battalions. Attacking from three sides of the town, the enemy entered Nam Tha on 6 May.]

In central and southern Laos, patrol activity and probing attacks continued to be the pattern of action. A redeployment of FAR units, necessitated by the move of the 11th Parachute Battalion to Nam Tha, took place in the neighborhood of Savannakhet.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to AIG 923, JCS. et al., DA IN 225019, 25 Apr 62; DA IN 224774, 26 Apr 62; DA IN 225070, 27 Apr 62; DA IN 225384, 28 Apr 62; DA IN 225842, 21 May 62; (TS-NOFORN) J-3, Southeast Asia SITREP 18-62, 2 May 62.

27 Apr 62 In a message to the JCS, CINCPAC reiterated his belief (see item 15 March 1962) that, if MAAG Laos was withdrawn but US military assistance to Laos continued, an organization similar to the former PEO Laos should be established within the US Country Team. The PEO had come into bad repute during its existence, CINCPAC commented, because it was inadequately and improperly manned; once it had been properly manned with military personnel, it had done a "respectable" job. CINCPAC recommended that military personnel be selected for placement within USOM Laos during the next few months and that a chief of a PEO-type organization, and his immediate staff, be designated so that the US would be prepared to continue supervising military assistance programs when and if MAAG Laos was withdrawn.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 270224Z Apr 62.

28 Apr 62 Referring to the goodwill mission the RLG was sending to various capitals in the Far East in order to gain moral

support for RLG resistance to a negotiated settlement and probably to request financial assistance as well, the Secretary of State told the US Embassies in seven Far Eastern countries there were indications that Phoumi and his group would be strongly influenced by the reception they received on their trip. The Thai Government, which was already cooperating fully with the US, believed that if other friendly Asian governments would support a peaceful settlement for Laos, Phoumi would change to a more realistic policy. On the other hand, if the RLG were to receive encouragement it might continue in its present dangerous course. Secretary Rusk instructed the Far Eastern Embassies to impress upon the governments concerned the importance the US attached to their support of a negotiated settlement of the Laotian problem. If necessary, US diplomats should point out that the US felt it had the right to expect "not passive acceptance but active support" of US policy from its Asian friends and allies. This would be particularly true, Rusk noted, of leaders of those countries that the US was "almost unilaterally keeping alive, e.g., Diem, Chiang, Pak."

The Secretary outlined several general points that might be used in the briefings and spelled out specific instructions for Ambassadors Nolting in Saigon and Stevenson in Manila. The US Ambassador to South Viet Nam was instructed to see President Diem and "insist that he support fully" the US policy in Laos. This policy was shared by other friends of SVN who were also lending assistance to Diem in his own struggle. Diem should understand, said Rusk, that the most effective way of curtailing Viet Cong use of the Lao corridor would be through implementation of the Geneva Agreements, and a coalition government would be necessary to put these into effect. It would be, therefore, to Diem's advantage to urge Phoumi to negotiate for coalition; a continuation of the present course in Laos would only worsen the situation for both the RLG and South Viet Nam.

Ambassador Stevenson in Manila was told to emphasize that a policy of peaceful settlement for Laos was not that of the US alone but was supported by all other Free World friends of Laos, including Thailand. The Secretary of State suggested to Stevenson that it might be useful to stress that the US, far from "writing Laos off," intended to give the non-Communists in a neutral Lao government strong political and economic assistance against the Communists.

(S) Msg, SecState CIRC 1850, 28 Apr 62.

30 Apr 62 Ambassador Brown called upon Acting Foreign Minister Sisouk, who appeared genuinely concerned about the rift between the RLG and the US Government. While Sisouk stressed his nation's need for US support, Brown warned that, unless Phoumi abandoned his plan to have the King form a new government (see item 17 April 1961), the US would take further action against the RLG. Sisouk, however, objected that the application of additional pressure would merely cause Phoumi "to dig in his heels."

Brown opened the conversation by asking Sisouk's views of prospects for the future. The Acting Foreign Minister replied that, although neither the military nor economic situations were good, he was slightly more optimistic. He based this optimism on his belief that the RLG, having realized the need for US aid and friendship, would shape a policy designed to maintain the best possible relations with the US. He did not believe that the RLG would do anything to worsen these relations.

Sisouk then stated that the mission to Bangkok (see items 25 and 27 April 1962) had been well received by the Thai Government. Sarit, however, had urged the RLG to be prudent, to regard carefully its relations with the US, and to give serious consideration to US advice. Most of the discussion had been devoted to military and economic matters. Such questions as the possible establishment of a troika for Defense and Interior had not been investigated.

Brown then declared that he had been discouraged by certain remarks attributed to Sisouk and Phoumi. According to the press, the Acting Foreign Minister had declared after the meeting with Sarit that Souvanna could not be relied upon to form a government. In addition, Phoumi had been quoted as insisting, on this same occasion, that he retain control of the Ministries of Defense and Interior. Sisouk replied that statements such as these were essential, for the delegation could not suddenly change its views without appearing to bow to the dictates of a foreign power. If the RLG did alter its stand, the change would not occur until the delegation had completed its entire tour of Asian nations. In that way, the RLG would maintain its prestige, since no one nation could be singled out as having forced this alteration of policy.

Sisouk then remarked that Souvanna should return to Laos and resume negotiations. Brown answered that the Prince would not return unless the RLG was willing to discuss Defense and Interior. When Sisouk asked what assurances Souvanna would give about, for example, the army, Brown said that, since the RLG was concerned about this subject, it was up to Phoumi and his colleagues to state exactly what guarantees they desired. The RLG, Brown continued, should be discussing the basis upon which it would negotiate concerning Defense and Interior. Once the conditions had been formulated, the RLG should be prepared to enter into sincere discussions regarding these key cabinet posts. The Ambassador, after observing that the US was willing to support the RLG in obtaining reasonable assurances on principal issues, suggested that Sisouk and his fellow cabinet officers concentrate on the suggested troika arrangement in Defense and Interior (see item 31 March 1962). The US had already mentioned this possible solution to Souvanna, who had indicated a willingness to accept it, and to Souphanouvong, who at least had not specifically rejected it.

Sisouk, after listening to Brown's arguments, maintained that the RLG could not, in advance of negotiations, make any public statement of the conditions under which it would yield Defense and Interior. The US Ambassador replied

that no public statement was necessary. All that was required was a reasonable assurance to Souvanna that the RLG would engage in serious negotiations regarding these posts.

Ambassador Brown then asked Sisouk if Phoumi intended to have the National Assembly, when it convened on 11 May, empower the King to form a new government. Sisouk explained that, since Phoumi would return to Vientiane from Malaya on 10 May and depart by the 14th for Taiwan and possibly the Philippines, it did not appear that there would be time for any major action during so brief a stay in the Lao capital. Brown nevertheless warned that the Western powers opposed the scheme as impractical. Not only would Souphanouvong and Souvanna reject such a plan; its unilateral implementation by the RLG would, in effect, revoke Souvanna's mandate, thus eliminating his moderating influence and leaving the right and left in direct confrontation. Sisouk, when asked by Brown, declined to give categorical assurance that, at least during May, no grant of powers would be voted to the King. The Acting Foreign Minister suggested that Brown seek confirmation from Phoumi that the King would not form a new government during the month of May.

In conclusion, Sisouk asked that the US, instead of bludgeoning the RLG into compliance, offer some means by which the Lao Government could save face. Brown replied that the US had for a long time relied on friendly advice and persuasion to convince the RLG to accept a coalition government led by Souvanna. These means, however, had proved useless. If the RLG, at some earlier time, had asked for a way of honorably abandoning its opposition to Souvanna, the US would have cooperated, but the RLG instead had grown increasingly rigid in its stand against the Prince. Since this was the case, the US had naturally grown correspondingly less gentle in its dealings with the Lao Government.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1462, 30 Apr 62.

30 Apr 62 During an interview with Ambassador Brown, Phoumi suggested a "basket solution" which included: 1) certain international commitments, such as those contained in the Geneva Agreements; and, in particular, an undertaking by the US to support vigorously the execution of these agreements; 2) agreement with Souvanna on the formation of a coalition government, along with special arrangements to govern Defense and Interior and assurances regarding the measures by which Souvanna would protect Laos from Communist domination; and 3) a private arrangement with the US "as to what would happen if things went badly under a Souvanna government." This solution, Phoumi believed, would eliminate the misunderstanding between the Lao and US Governments.

In commenting upon the first point in the proposed settlement, Brown assured Phoumi that the US, since it was eager to see the adoption of the Geneva Agreements, would play its full role in making the agreements work as effectively as possible. The conversation then turned to the second point, as Phoumi and Brown engaged in a long discussion of how to renew contact with Souvanna, of the assurances that Souvanna and the US could extend to the RLG, and of the possible revocation of the Prince's mandate.

Brown recommended that Souvanna be told that the RLG wished to enter into serious discussions concerning the surrender to the neutral group of the Defense and Interior portfolios. Phoumi, after acknowledging that Souvanna's mandate remained valid in spite of his withdrawal to Paris, declared that the RLG wished to correct the misunderstanding that had alienated Souvanna. Phoumi then asked if the US, because of the insecurity of Lao codes, would transmit a message to the Prince. The message, however, would have to be delivered in a fashion that would not imply "retreat" by Phoumi. Brown agreed to transmit the message in the manner that would cause Phoumi the least embarrassment.

Regarding the assurances sought by the RLG, Brown asked Phoumi to explain the type of guarantees he desired. The US probably would agree with many of these conditions and consequently would support him in asking Souvanna and Souphanouvong to accept them.

Ambassador Brown then declared that the US objective in Laos was to shift the fight against Communism from the military to the political, psychological, and economic fields. After Phoumi had expressed agreement with this objective, Brown noted that the anti-Communists possessed several advantages in these three areas. Listed as advantages were: 1) Phoumi's energy, knowledge of the situation, and ability, as a member of the coalition, to deal with Souvanna; 2) the basic dislike of most Lao for the Pathet Lao; 3) acceleration of the civil action and rural development programs; and 4) the "economic resources which could be put into the electoral battle."

The election of a government to succeed the coalition, Brown continued, was the key to the future of Laos. Souvanna, after all, had declared that the Pathet Lao had to be defeated in these elections if the kingdom was to be saved from Communism. Because of the importance of the electoral campaign, Phoumi could rest assured that the US would render financial, technical, and material support to the anti-Communist forces.

The US Ambassador then turned to Phoumi's proposal that the King form a new government. The US, France, and Britain were concerned about the plan, since the King's acceptance of office would automatically revoke Souvanna's mandate. This, in turn, would result in a direct confrontation between the RLG and the Pathet Lao. Phoumi, when asked if he intended to implement the plan as scheduled, remarked that he might have been misunderstood. The King, after all, could take advantage of a grant of powers to appoint Souvanna as Prime Minister. At any rate, nothing could be done for the next few weeks, since the proposal had not even been discussed with members of the National Assembly.

Brown then reminded Phoumi of the numerous public and private statements to the effect that a Government headed by the King was the only solution. (For examples of such statements, see items 3 and 13 and 17 April 1962.) The Western Powers had accepted these statements at face value

and therefore viewed the situation with grave concern. Unless reassured on this point, the US and its allies might be compelled to "take some further action which might aggravate the situation." At Brown's insistence, Phoumi then declared that the RLG, at least during the month of May, would not discuss with the National Assembly either the granting of full powers to the King or the King's forming a new government.

After discussing these various aspects of the formation of a coalition government, the two men turned to the third point, a private arrangement between the US and Phoumi that would take effect if Souvanna failed. Brown merely said that he would be interested to learn the precise arrangement that Phoumi had in mind. Phoumi then expressed a wish to visit the US once again. Instead of explaining the RLG position, however, he would explore the kind of arrangements that could be made with the US to give maximum assurance that, if the RLG did yield Defense and Interior to the neutrals and participate in the coalition, the country would not slip into Communism. Phoumi believed that any private arrangement with the US should be kept secret, but, if the US insisted that any other party in Laos should be informed, he would agree to "let him in on the secret."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1460, 30 Apr 62; 1461, 30 Apr 62.

30 Apr 62

Acting Foreign Minister Sisouk handed Ambassador Brown a message for delivery to the Lao Embassy in Paris, under the arrangement made by Phoumi with the Ambassador earlier in the day (see item). Sisouk requested that the US also approach Souvanna along the lines set forth in the message. He asked that these parallel approaches be kept completely confidential, since the other members of the RLG cabinet were not aware that overtures to Souvanna were under way. Souvanna, moreover, should not be told that the US Government knew of Sisouk's message to the Lao Embassy in Paris. Brown agreed to deliver the message and recommended to the Secretary of State that Ambassador Gavin be instructed to approach Souvanna.

Sisouk, in the message destined for Paris, directed the Lao Ambassador there to get in touch secretly with Souvanna in order to ascertain: 1) the Prince's personal views regarding the present political impasse; 2) the possibility of a peaceful settlement on the basis of previous communiques issued by the three Princes; 3) the date of Souvanna's return to Laos; and 4) any assurances that Souvanna could offer in return for RLG concessions regarding the portfolios of Defense and Interior. The Lao Ambassador was to stress the extreme importance to the RLG of assurances by Souvanna that he could prevent the Communist domination of the kingdom. Ambassador Brown, however, considered this demand that Souvanna repeat his pledge not to yield to the Communists to be an attempt by the RLG to save face while abandoning its previous opposition to the Prince.

The parallel US approach, as outlined by Ambassador Brown, would begin with a statement that Phoumi had

indicated privately that the RLG was willing to negotiate on all aspects of a coalition government, including the Defense and Interior Ministries. These negotiations would be conducted in the spirit of the various communiques previously issued by the Princes.

The US approach also would indicate the RLG's concern about the possible consequences to the FAR and to the country if Souvanna were given both the Defense and Interior portfolios. For that reason, the RLG desired certain assurances from Souvanna. The Government sought, for example, a guarantee that, prior to agreement on their integration, the existing armed forces would remain intact and in place. It also sought an arrangement whereby the Minister of Defense or Interior could make no decision without the unanimous consent of the three factions. In addition, the RLG desired renewed assurance from Souvanna that he would not permit himself to be dominated by the Communists.

Upon receipt of the above in Washington, the Acting Secretary of State immediately instructed Ambassador Gavin to deliver Sisouk's message to the Lao Embassy in Paris and to make the requested parallel US approach to Souvanna. Gavin should coordinate these actions with the French Foreign Office and keep in mind the primary objective of bringing about a favorable exchange between Phoumi and Souvanna. (See item 2 May 1962.)

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1463, 1464, 30 Apr 62; SecState to Paris, 5787, 30 Apr 62.

30 Apr 62

In instructions to Ambassador Brown, the Acting Secretary of State expressed concern over the deployment of the 11th Parachute Battalion to Nam Tha (see item 27 April 1962). He suspected that this move meant the FAR was preparing for offensive action to expand the perimeter there, since the State Department's information was that "FAR forces already heavily outnumber the enemy at Nam Tha and are adequate to maintain defensive positions." Unless the Ambassador found that the 11th Parachute Battalion was actually being used for replacement rather than reinforcement at Nam Tha, he was to tell Phoumi that the US strongly opposed the redeployment as an unwise utilization of troops badly needed elsewhere and as a "provocation which could possibly result in a FAR military set-back." (See item 1 May 1962.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 926, 30 Apr 62.